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TO  
MY REVERED TEACHER  
EDWARD D. MORRIS  
EMINENT IN THE GRACES OF CHARACTER  
AND IN  
THE GIFTS OF INTELLECT



## PREFACE

THE author of this volume has sometimes thought that he would be glad to devote the remainder of his ministry to the simple task of helping men to see that the Bible is an interesting Book. He is aware that to some this might seem an insignificant task, while to others it might appear unduly ambitious, if not presumptuous. To himself it seems not unworthy and not without the insistence of pressing need.

The hour is apparently at hand when the church, with its affiliated organizations, is prepared to recognize that the problem that overtops every other is the problem of bringing the Word of God to the world, and bringing the world to the Word of God. To say this is not to forget the emphasis that has been rightfully laid in this generation upon Christian activity; but the very energy of this activity has revealed anew the necessity for close contact with the Scripture. Teaching and preaching, two functions that condition the very life of the church, must receive attention all the more because of the intellectual and spiritual vigor of the age. Despite the brilliancy of the modern pulpit, and the strength and resource of modern methods of biblical teaching, the conviction slowly dawns upon many that the church is not abreast of the educational spirit of the times. Religious education is by no means commen-

surate with secular education in interest and result. The wealth and resource of the Bible have not been fully enough exposed. It is, to be sure, always the Book of the people, yet multitudes are holding it at arm's length, instead of admitting it into the close fellowship of interest. The rise of two or more great associations for the study of the problems of religious education, the resolution of several leading denominations in the same direction, the multiplication of agencies, both personal and associational, for the promotion of interest among the people in biblical literature, are signs of the times that give abundant warrant to the consideration of the topics presented here.

A few of the studies of this volume were given in very unelaborated form in a series of lectures delivered by the author several years ago to the students of Lane Theological Seminary, under the title "Illuminative Methods with the Word." One of the chapters, "The Strength of the Pulpit," was given nearly in its present form as a Commencement Address to the graduates of the Omaha Theological Seminary in May, 1906. Most of the suggestions offered here have been brought to the test of actual experience in church work. The author indulges a prayerful hope that these studies, the result of close attention in the pastorate and in the college classroom, may contribute something to the growth of interest in the Book.

The need of the hour is to know the fulness of the Word, to possess the skill of workmen that need not be ashamed, and to pour the plenitude of the Book upon the lives of the people, that they may know the

fascination of it intellectually and spiritually, and more than all, may come to know the irresistibleness of that gospel which renders it incomparable among all the literatures of the world.

E. W. W.

COLORADO SPRINGS.



## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE BIBLE INTERESTING	13
II. THE ARGUMENT OF NEED	22
III. THE SURPRISE OF SCRIPTURE	35
IV. THE RELIGIOUS USE OF IMAGINATION	52
V. THE ZEST OF HISTORY	71
VI. THE GRASP OF THE BOOKS	85
VII. THE LITERATURE OF COURAGE	103
VIII. THE CHARM OF LETTERS	122
IX. PURPLE AND FINE LINEN	140
X. THE BIBLE AND AFFAIRS	160
XI. FOUR PICTURES OF JESUS	180
XII. THE STRENGTH OF THE PULPIT	205
XIII. THE SCRIPTURE AND CHILDHOOD	234



# THE FASCINATION OF THE BOOK

## I

### THE BIBLE INTERESTING

*The Bible is an interesting Book.*

It is the purpose of this volume to show that this proposition is not only thoroughly defensible, but also that an intelligent recognition of its truth is necessary to the most efficient use of the Word.

The proposition is likely to present itself in different forms to different minds, and even with varied meanings to the same mind.

Its first and most patent meaning is found in the transcendent importance of the Scripture as Revelation. The term *interesting* as applied to the Bible obtains in this view a supernatural meaning and intensity. Considering its purpose and contents, the sweep of its design from Heaven to Earth, from Earth to Heaven, no other book possesses such a high degree of interest to the soul. The Book which has preserved for this world the memory of the life and death of Jesus Christ—for this Book the term interesting seems all inadequate.

Another class of minds is satisfied with a much lower view of the Scripture. To them it is sufficient

to say that the Bible is interesting as a phenomenon in the world's spiritual history, a literary monument to the age-long aspirations of the human soul. As such the Bible is constantly to be reckoned with among the facts and forces of life. The rationalistic thinker does not feel called upon to assert the authentic supernaturalism of the Bible; but he is not for that reason careless of its remarkable interest for mankind.

Still another interpretation of the proposition that the Bible is an interesting Book is found in the thought of its general worth and impressiveness. This is the popular estimate, and may be consistently held either in connection with high supernatural or low rationalistic views. Few persons can escape this strange sense of dignity and worth in the Bible. Whatever theories of its origin and authority may be held, it never ceases to be of interest to the sentiments of mankind. This may fairly be described as the atmospheric influence of the Scripture, and as such it is pervasive and penetrative. The solidest and most legitimate tradition among us is the tradition of the value of the Word of God. Neither science nor criticism can destroy this conviction of the heart. Happily the interest which men feel in religion, as Tholuck remarked, rises from the heart to the head; and it will therefore maintain itself, at least in relative strength, apart from the theories and methods of the schools.

Yet there is another meaning, the most simple of all, in our initial statement, which is not adequately recognized in either of the foregoing estimates. The Bible is interesting—simply *interesting*. The term,

in other words, is as properly applied to the Bible as it is to any other book. To say this is not to put the Bible on a par with other books; it is, nevertheless, to recognize a kinship between it and other books without which it would scarcely be able to accomplish its purpose for the human heart. It amounts to saying, what this volume is intended in various ways to illustrate, that the Bible as a divine Revelation has made use of the ordinary avenues of approach to the human mind. No new or separate set of faculties has been constituted as a tribunal before which the Bible may present its claims. Its appeal is to the ordinary faculties, the same that enter into judgment upon the common affairs of life.

Now it is in view of the standards set up in this common court of the mind, standards expressed by such terms as reason, judgment, logic, taste, sentiment, beauty, strength, order—whatever the mind finds to be worthy and useful in an instrument of appeal to the soul—it is in view of these that the Bible is in a very practical sense an interesting Book. In reality it is no slight advantage to be able to say the same thing of the Book of God that is said of the books of men. There is far less difficulty indeed in showing men the singular supernaturalism that separates the Scripture from all other books, than in showing them those traits and qualities of the Bible that associate it in the feelings of men with books of ordinary human authorship, in short, the characteristics that give to the Word its sense of *familiarity*, its force of intimacy, its sway with the natural instincts of the mind.

Objection has been frequently made to Coleridge's description of the influence of the Bible as "finding him in his being more deeply than any other book," as a quite too individualistic dictum, apt to result in a selective process, choosing some parts and rejecting others. Yet it is this very individual impressiveness, this finding of the soul at the point of its varied faculties, this appeal to the widest and deepest areas of intelligence, that constitutes *interest*. It is not impossible that our methods of handling the Word have been sometimes forgetful of the fact that a Revelation must present itself not alone to the great source of interest, namely, religion, but to all those concomitant sources of interest in the soul which are calculated to feed and illuminate the master passion.

The very fact that to some the proposition with which we have set out will seem unusual, that to not a few it may appear even to be a lowering of the dignity of the Scripture, is at once an evidence of the need of a discussion of the proposition. That the Bible is a supernatural Book, that it is a unique Book, that it is historically an important Book, that it has proved itself a valuable Book, that it is a thought-producing and life-quicken<sup>ing</sup> Book—each of these ideas has received ample attention. But that the Bible is an interesting Book is almost too simple, too unscientific a proposition to find entrance to the schools. Moreover, the neglect of this common qualification of the Bible may have passed over into the method of presenting the Scripture to men, so that teaching and preaching, rightly regarding standards of orthodoxy and propriety, have at

the same time failed to pay legitimate attention to standards of real interest.

In short, it has been far too uncommon to urge the attractiveness of the Bible, to press its fascination upon the mind. Its fascination reaches its climax in the revelation of divine truth, in the breaking of the news of redemption to the soul. And it is found at many lower points as well; in fact it is found all the way from the lower levels of interest up to that highest level. The Bible is a Book with as many phases as human nature itself possesses. Intended as it undoubtedly is as the chief instrument of God for the religious life of man, it is at the same time so amply furnished in its quantitative and qualitative parts as to possess a real fascination for the mind in the terms of human interest.

It should be wholly unnecessary to affirm that the discussion of the fascination of the Book is in no sense indifferent to the questions of inspiration and authority. Our study is certain indeed to have its bearing upon these questions. We have here, however, practical ends in view. We are seeking to discover how best, as Bunyan said of his book, to lay the Word of God to the hearts of the people; we are asking whether there may not be sources of common interest in the Bible which, if more generously opened, would reveal more attractively both the natural and supernatural wealth of the Scripture. We are considering such simple, yet profound, questions as these: Is it an interesting Book?—using the descriptive term with its ordinary and every-day meaning. Do the people believe that it is interesting? Have they been taught

so to think of it? What are the sources of interest in the Scripture? What are the best methods of revealing these sources? What laws of the mind and what fixed laws of teaching are easily available for presenting the Word? Is there any connection between the appreciation of the Bible on this confessedly lower human plane, and the higher spiritual appreciation which opens the door to the Kingdom of God?

There is, to be sure, a quick method of disposing of these and all kindred questions. It may be said: The Bible is the Word of God and must be received as such. With these questions relating to the sources of human interest we have nothing to do, except as very minor considerations. Men should be taught that it is their bounden duty to read and heed the Holy Bible. The question of whether or not it is an interesting Book in the ordinary sense, is not a question of first importance.

Several considerations are worthy of attention in this connection.

1. The question of whether or not the Bible is an interesting Book is not a question to be treated with indifference. On the contrary, so much depends upon it that no teacher of the Bible can afford to regard it as unimportant. The popular point of contact with the Bible is relatively the same as with any other book. The point of contact is *interest*. If we could conceive of the Word of God as being supernatural to an absolute degree, as lacking wholly in those points of human interest which enable the mind to realize a familiar contact with it, if we could conceive of it as being dull, flat, meagre,

we should have a Book of which it would not be too much to say that it invited the mind of man to its perusal, and at the same time repelled it. Canon Farrar has justly said that "something would be lacking to any revelation which proved itself, even in outward expression, inferior to other human writings." It is a matter of the highest importance that the world should feel that the Word of God is the best possible, that it possesses in an unusual degree the elements of attractiveness and interest. Nor should any teacher of the Bible be content to rest the case of the Bible with the people alone upon its authority. Its authority, its supernatural origin, inspiration, and power, constitute the final appeal. But there is a large area outside of this final court in which much may be done to quicken interest, to heighten respect, to inspire study.

2. The relevancy of the question is further emphasized by a frank consideration of the state of the popular mind on the subject. This is realized at once when we remember that it does not readily occur to the average person, even among its friends, to think of the Bible as an interesting Book. Many indeed might seriously question it. It has not been presented often enough in this light to make us familiar with the conception. There is everywhere high respect for it. Its authority is denied only in exceptional cases. Its permanent value to the race is freely acknowledged. That it is "part of the national mind and the anchor of national seriousness" is willingly admitted.

Despite all this, it will be confessed that the average reader reads the Bible rather with a sense of

duty than with a sense of relish. That this should be true in a reading age, in a time when the love of literature is increasing rather than decreasing, in a time also when many educational influences are at work to foster the love of language, and the fascination of literature, is, to say the least, a phenomenon in the mental life of the world worth studying from the historical standpoint, if not from the standpoint of the advocate or the alarmist. No one would dream of saying that the Bible is intended to furnish mere entertainment to the mind, a sort of stately *Arabian Nights' Tales*. Nor would any be willing to say that it is designed as a literary feast, for the antiquary, for the enthusiast in language study, for the student of literary modes and varieties. Such an estimate of the Holy Scripture, as Canon Farrar suggests, would deserve the boundless contempt which Wordsworth expressed for the man who could "peep and botanize upon his mother's grave."

But the simple fact, bluntly stated, is, that in the popular mind the Bible is not generally enough known as an interesting Book. It is too infrequently read with interest. People set themselves a daily "task" of Bible reading. They worry through by dint of perseverance, or, closing it altogether, they depend for their knowledge of the Book upon public teachers. It is needless to add that this popular feeling about the Bible as an uninteresting Book, as dull and unenlivening, is a palpable injustice that deals a deep hurt, too little recognized, to the cause of religion. If this false impression could be removed, the point of contact would be established, for the point of contact with the Bible, in view of the

laws of the human mind, must be the same as with any other book. This is *interest*.

3. It is not then a needless question—rather a very important one—for those to consider who have the task of dividing the Word of Truth aright—How can popular interest in the Bible be quickened? How can the popular point of contact with the Bible be renewed and intensified? How can the barriers of indifference, of preoccupation, of misconception be removed? How can the Word be made to find entrance, that it may give its light, and open the way for the Kingdom of God?

It is not unlikely that the divine revelation will be found to contain many or all of those elements of human interest which make it more than any other book of the world the Book of the people, calculated by its external powers of attraction, as well as by its inner and transcendent message, to feed both intellect and heart. Neither is it improbable that the spiritual message of the Book, intensely important as it is, may have obscured a little its native human interest, and caused it to lose for some the touch of kinship, the joy of discovery, the fascination of interest. The Bible, though the most divine of books, is at the same time intensely, dramatically, humanly interesting.

## II

### THE ARGUMENT OF NEED

WHAT are the facts that throw light upon present-day interest in the Bible?

They are both encouraging and discouraging. Encouragement is found in the permanency of the pulpit message, and its strong hold upon the people; in the printing and sale of increasing numbers of copies of the Scripture; in a great world Bible Class of over twenty-five millions studying the International Lessons from week to week; in the work of young people's organizations for the promotion of Bible Study; in the rise of new and strong organizations intended to foster interest in the Bible as the greatest single factor of the spiritual life; and in the opening of the curriculum in many colleges and universities to the study of biblical literature.

It is no doubt true that no age of the world has exceeded this one in *extensive* devotion to the Word of God. Yet these encouraging facts do not furnish sufficient reason for complacency on the subject.

The critical spirit of the age has produced a two-fold result. With the critic himself it has often brought him into closer touch with the Bible, and, though with changed ideas in many particulars, it has convinced him more deeply than before of the Bible's rare attractions, its uncommon beauty, its

sweet and reasonable humanity, "that lives on the ear like music which can never be forgotten."

The misfortune of criticism has appeared for the most part among the people, where the sound of the fray within the schools has been heard from afar. Not a few have turned away from the Scripture to seek instruction and comfort in some Bible of humanity. Some have learned the language of hostility. The present generation, unfortunately, has experienced many obstacles to faith. Despite this the spirit of recovery is at work, and many are returning from their foreign quest, some indeed with intellectual changes that can never be surrendered,—

"To find that all the sages said  
Is in the Book our mothers read."

Whatever the final effect of criticism may be, it must be evident that a critical age more than any other is in need of strong and wise methods of maintaining the wholesome influence of the Scripture. No critic can be so destructive as to desire to destroy the helpful power of the Bible in human life.

The real danger lies not in criticism, but in indifferent friendship. The Kingdom of God can endure hostility better than neglect. The "leaden instinct" which Herbert Spencer declared to be the real peril of politics, is also the peril of religion. We have long since discovered the fallacy of St. Augustine's dictum, "The ignorant take the Kingdom of Heaven." One is reminded of Emerson's definition of distant and formal friendship—"Knowing a friend by his buttons." The Bible has a multitude of

friends who are friends by tradition and hearsay, not from close acquaintance.

The Bible suffers in the hands of its friends, suffers from being neglected. The rank and file of the membership of the churches are letting the Bible alone, believing it and respecting it, but leaving it untouched. The statement has been ventured that two-thirds or three-fourths of the membership of the average Christian Church do not open the Book oftener than once a month. Whatever the statistical truth may be, it is not to be doubted that the churches are filled with members who are little more than casual readers of the Scripture. The percentage that is doing real Bible study is no doubt alarmingly small. If any minister, teacher, or leader is prepared to question these statements, it must be that he has had the "Isles of the Blessed" or the "Delectable Mountains" as the field of observation and labor.

The church as a whole cannot be said to be alive to the Word of God. It fears the drudgery of searching the Scripture, and knows far too little of the joy and plenitude of it. No problem of church life equals this one; yet it has scarcely received adequate attention in modern study of church questions. Questions of organization, of theology, of extension, have received large attention. Meantime the greatest of all questions—*how to reach the people efficiently with the Word*—has been too lightly considered.

Neither is there as much encouragement in the work of young people's organizations as could be desired. It is true that the Bible has been more in

the hands of the young people of this generation than any other. It is also true that the methods of using the Bible in vogue in these organizations has not been as a rule promotive of real interest in the Scripture. The expression of the Christian life through testimony and organization has been until now the dominant issue. The need of the solidification of study is only beginning to appear. As these organizations enter, as they are bound to do soon, if indeed the transition is not already well under way, upon the second stage of their history, it is devoutly to be wished that they might be wisely led into a more careful and more educative use of the Scripture. There is even now a great task awaiting the appointed leaders in the Church of Christ. It is the task of conserving the energies of the young forces of the church, of giving full scope to their fresh enthusiasm, and at the same time securing their hearty response to the worth and attractiveness of the Word of God, thus opening the way to a *new education*. Such a second stage in the development of young people's work might be characterized by a higher quality of work, by methods of genuine productiveness. If the first stage has been marked by aggression, the second should be marked by aggression based upon concentration. One of the great needs of the church to-day is for some institute work for young people, with the Scripture as its basis and material.\*

It is no longer regarded as a sign of hostility to speak of the imperfections of Sabbath School work. No one thinks of denying the tremendous effective-

\* See Chapter XIII, "The Scripture and Childhood."

ness of the Sabbath School in the last hundred years. From the beginning it has been a powerful and constantly growing arm of the church, enlisting many of the most gifted sons and daughters of the church in its work. Yet in one respect the Sabbath School has been a stupendous failure. Notwithstanding it is organized to do the work of a school, it has produced no intensive education in the Bible, neither has it created by its methods of study a widespread feeling of interest and enthusiasm. Whilst secular education has constantly advanced both in ideal and method, religious education in the Sabbath School has witnessed a very slow development. Many of the most ardent friends of the Sabbath School are now thoroughly awake to this situation, and the signs of progress are multiplying. The fact that many of the children of the church spend ten years or more in the church school, and come out with a very limited store of scriptural knowledge, and with little interest in the Book itself, ought to be a fact of great significance for students of Sabbath School work.\*

The work of the home in fostering the influence of the Bible, and creating a real love for it, has been greatly weakened. No other source of anxiety is so great as this. The Bible is pre-eminently the Book of the home. In the soil of the home the roots of its influence are calculated to sink the deepest. If we could find ways of reinstating the Bible in the home, all are agreed that the problem of religious education would obtain speedy relief.

The pulpit cannot be omitted in a survey of the

\* See Chapter XIII, "The Scripture and Childhood."

facts bearing upon popular interest in the Bible. Whatever new elements of strength the pulpit may have discovered, it is very evident that its strength is not so manifestly the strength of the Word of God as it once was. It is a real source of dismay that in the time when many things have called the minds of the people away from the fascination of the Book, the pulpit should have swerved at all from its call to "preach the Word." The studies of this volume are intended to lay emphasis upon the responsibility of the pulpit as one of the chief educational forces of the church, and to urge the use of such methods of public instruction as are calculated to intensify the biblical atmosphere of the pulpit and at the same time make for popular interest in the Word of God.\*

The fact plainly stated is that the church is not interesting the people enough in the chief instrument of its life. There is little popular ardor for the Scripture. Original interest is not being awakened; the people are not being impelled in large numbers to first-hand contact with the Scripture; the church's teachers are not producing popular relish for the Bible. Candor compels the admission that while the church is doing many things well, the methods of its work are not, except in limited areas, *making for interest in the Book*. The phenomenon to which our attention is addressed is this, that in the increase of human interests, the multiplication of knowledge, the growth of literature, science, taste, education, refinement, the Bible has partly fallen out. Why has not the Bible profited by the growth of reading

\* See Chapter XII, "The Strength of the Pulpit."

habits among the people? Why has not interest in the Bible kept pace with interest in other literature? Some would find a theological or a moral cause for the difference, but we are led to suspect that there is another cause—we have not taken sufficient pains to invest the Bible with interest. Hence we have a more or less educated public that is assiduous in its devotion to the attractive forms of literature, following eagerly the ancient and modern works of the imagination in prose and poetry, giving no little attention to history, to philosophy, to science, to government, to many questions of human welfare and conduct that have passed into some form of literary expression. But the same educated public furnishes for the most part only casual readers of the Bible.

There are general tokens of the popular lapse of the Bible that cannot be passed by. One is the growing lack of familiarity with the Scripture. There is, in fact, difference of opinion at this point, some holding that the Bible is even more in the hearts of the people than before. The general impression, however, is that the Scripture is constantly falling behind in the educational progress of the people. Very high authorities have spoken upon this subject. The forty-first annual convention of the National Education Association, deplored the exclusion of the Bible from the schools in many of the states, said, "It is apparent that familiarity with the English Bible as a masterpiece of literature is rapidly decreasing among the pupils in our schools." A professor of literature in one of the largest of the state universities stated in public that the greatest hin-

drance met in the English Department of his University was ignorance of the English Bible. Prominent educators have interested themselves in making tests of the popular knowledge of the Scripture; and their conclusions are entitled to great weight. The startling fact brought out is that the average Scripture knowledge among young men and young women of college age, most of whom presumably have passed under the discipline of home and Sabbath School and pulpit, is discouragingly low.\*

We do not forget that literal knowledge of the Scripture does not of necessity involve real acquaintance with it, nor do we forget that committing to memory is a disputed pedagogical method. There

\* A professor of English literature in Amherst College stated several years ago that he had floored an entire Junior class by a reference in one of the poems of Dryden to the blind patriarch feeling after his son's hands. In a large American university a professor of literature read two pages from an English classic containing several biblical allusions. Very few in the large class were able to detect or explain such references as the Valley of Dry Bones, the Waters of Marah, and the Cave of Adullam. A professor of philosophy in Northwestern University made a test with one hundred students. He asked them nine simple questions, such as, "What is the Pentateuch?" "Is the Book of Jude in the Old or New Testament?" "Name one of the judges." "Give one of the Beatitudes." Out of ninety-six papers returned only eight gave correct answers to all the questions. Over half could not locate the Book of Jude. Solomon, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Leviticus were named as judges. Matthew, Luke, and John were turned into prophets, while Herod, Ananias, and Nebuchadnezzar were transformed into Kings of Israel. One student said that the Pentateuch was the same as the Gospel. The most interesting recent experiment is that of President Thwing of Western Reserve University, described at length in *The Century Magazine*, May, 1900, "Significant Ignorance about the Bible." The

is a Jewish Synagogue in one of our cities where there are said to be as many as two score persons who can repeat the entire Bible, giving even the numerical position of words. Yet of these persons the rabbi says, "They are densely ignorant of the Bible." Such merely mechanical knowledge could have no other result. It is nevertheless true that ignorance is a great barrier to interest. Popular love for the Word of God can hardly be expected as a consequence, unless acquaintance with it is presupposed as a cause. It is therefore a real source of alarm to discover that our methods of religious education have left, even within the intensive circles of our instruction, so much ignorance of the Scripture.

test was given to thirty-four Freshmen, nearly all from religious families in Ohio, New York, and Pennsylvania, more than half from two denominations that are supposed to give large attention to religious education. The test consisted of passages from Tennyson each containing a biblical allusion. Thirty-two had never heard of the "Shadow turning back on the dial." Twenty-five could not explain a reference to Lot's wife. Twenty-seven were paralyzed by the allusion, "A whole Peter's Sheet." Twenty-eight were laid low by a reference to Jonah's gourd. Almost any minister could add to this list of experiences. A reference to the necessity of having Aaron and Hur on the church roll created considerable question in a congregation of more than ordinary intelligence; and another more obscure reference to Rizpah of the Old Testament was almost a nine days' wonder. Such facts as these evidently influenced Chancellor MacCracken of New York University to make his proposal that colleges and universities should require from every Freshman a Sunday School diploma, certifying that he knew by heart the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, a church catechism, and a score of the Psalms and classic hymns. "So much as in us lies," the Chancellor adds, "we will make the College a place for preserving and strengthening reverence for things divine."

There is yet a more serious side of the matter. Lack of acquaintance results in mental atrophy. The things that are out of mind are soon out of heart. A generation that does not know the Bible has already a tendency to cease practising it. This consequence of the popular lapse in biblical instruction has attracted serious attention not alone from the side of the theologian, but also from the side of literature and public life. A recent magazine writer \* refers with extreme frankness to the "arid and astounding ignorance" that has succeeded the "old saturation with biblical phraseology and imagery and illustration." Bible thought is not so evidently "second nature" with the present generation as it was with previous generations. New modes of thought, new mental attitudes, have come in, such as the scientific, the literary, the sociological, and the Bible has scarcely held its own. We are not now referring to hostility or to indifference, but to something a little more insidious than either of these, though not so threatening; namely, the failure to impregnate the popular mind with biblical influence. To such an extent has the dominance of biblical thought decreased that it may be questioned whether, even for the average Christian, the Bible is now the powerful norm and rubric of life and faith that it once was.

The meaning may become clear by reference to the testimony of Mr. Ruskin in a well-known passage. After referring to his early habit of memorizing the Scripture, and furnishing a list of passages and

\* "The Literary Loss of the Bible," by Rollo Ogden, *The Century Magazine*, February, 1903. Several quotations are taken above from this writer.

chapters in which his mother drilled him, he sums up his impressions of the value of the Bible to him in a remarkable statement. It has been to him, he affirms, "strictly conclusive, and protective in all his modes of thought." Now it is this very *conclusive and protective power* which seems to have declined. The cry is too far of course from Puritan New England, with its Hebraic fervor and intensity, nourished by the reading of the Old Testament, to the braw days of the twentieth century in Europe and America, with their mingled atmosphere of religion, science, philosophy, and politics. A closer and more legitimate illustration may be found in the history of an individual who has unconsciously passed out of the atmosphere of the Bible, which in the earlier years was the "nursery of thought" to him, into quite different regions of life. Such a change, which is ever a pathetic sign of declension, is apt to be marked by "the perishing of young associations," the waning of once potent and formative imaginations and ideals, the passing of a certain glow of feeling, a certain spiritual *verve*, that formerly gave beauty and zest to life. As a spiritual phenomenon this condition of lapsed feeling is far more common than the actual disappearance of faith. That it has close logical connection with the decline in Bible knowledge can hardly be doubted. If in one decade of life knowledge of the Word becomes inactive, in the next decade a lapse of feeling will be sure to appear.

Such a change as has been described might be expected to register itself in the conversation of the people. If conversation is rightly to be classed

among the “lost arts,” the reason in part is found in the decrease of popular acquaintance with “the only great literature” within reach of the common people, to use Mr. Huxley’s description of the Bible. It is scarcely to be doubted that the richness, the stateliness, the tonic of spiritual feeling, which were observed in the speech of earlier generations, were due in large measure to the saturation of the mind with the thought and language of the Scripture. And there is good reason to think that according as the people have moved away from the atmosphere of the Scripture, have carried its thought, its ideals, its images, less constantly in mind, they have lost in richness of thought and language.

The same remark applies to public speech. Eloquence in public speech is still common enough, but the stately oration is numbered among the lost treasures of the people. Indeed, it would be less appreciated than before if it could be renewed. It is easy to appreciate the statement made of Daniel Webster that his customary preparation for the delivery of an oration was to read the eighth Psalm and the fortieth chapter of Isaiah; but we hardly expect such deference to the Bible in these days. Puritan stateliness, reverent loftiness of thought, strong, fibrous connection with a spiritual past, scriptural poise and lift of feeling are not the characteristics of modern oratory. Whatever gifts and graces modern oratory and literature may have, they are not such as belong characteristically to the literature of courage, of aspiration, of thought, of devotion, found in the Holy Bible.

Such a survey of the facts bearing upon the popu-

## 34 THE FASCINATION OF THE BOOK

lar knowledge and appreciation of the Bible certainly warrants the conclusion, that the greatest of all problems for the church's teachers and leaders is the problem of bringing the people under the fascination of the Book.

### III

#### THE SURPRISE OF SCRIPTURE

CHARLES READE, the novelist, somewhere states that at the suggestion of Sir Edwin Arnold he took up the Old Testament and read it as if it were a new book to him. It is interesting to contemplate this gifted writer, with his imaginative temperament, coming to the Bible in such a frame of mind. No doubt he would meet with many genuine surprises. He would come upon many unexpected discoveries. He would open for himself many new sources of delight. He would find material for imagination and stimulus for thought before undreamed of. In short, he would undergo the very pleasant experience of having an inviting picture of his mind turn into a reality—the Bible would become a *new Book* to him.

The advice upon which Mr. Reade acted is sufficient to put any thoughtful teacher or preacher of the Word in a “brown study.” Two things are immediately suggested. *First.* That this method of approach to the Bible must be the secret of every wise method. *Second.* That there exists a widespread mental condition in respect to the Bible which demands a cure.

The method suggested is in reality not a method at all. It is rather an attitude, a mental state. We have often observed how a child will return again

and again to the reading of the same book, each time with some new element of interest. It remains a new book to him. Even the adult mind knows something of this experience. There are certain books that have travelled with us through all the "tract of years." An active man of business related to the author how from boyhood he had periodically re-read a certain book that he loved, and had never failed to enjoy it.\*

Another thing to be noted in this connection is the keen regret which the mind often feels in the reading of a book a second or third time, that it is not now the first reading, in order that the relish and novelty of first contact might be a present experience. This regret, however, is overcome in part in the case of a really valuable book, for the mind will continue from time to time to break into new meanings of the book, and make ever new discoveries of strength or beauty. The expectation that good books will be read and re-read is a part of the commercial estimate. When an author dies, for instance, the publishers proceed at once to new editions, knowing that many will read the old books again with new

\* Lord Macaulay, who was an omnivorous reader, was accustomed to re-read his books many times. "I have no pleasure in books," he wrote, "which equals that of reading over for the hundredth time great productions which I almost know by heart." A record in his journal says, "Home, and I have read 'Gil Blas.' Charming! I am never tired of it." Addressing an assembly of business and working men in England, Mr. John Morley, the biographer of Gladstone, said, "It is a great mistake to think that, because you have read a masterpiece once, twice, or ten times, therefore you have done with it. Because it is a masterpiece, you ought to live with it, and make it part of your daily life."

zest. This question of keeping interest awake and alert is really at the bottom of successful teaching. All methods are inadequate that do not in some way promote and appeal to that lively state of the mind called *interest*. To bring a scholar back to an old book and make it seem new to him, to invest familiar realms of thought with fascination, to prevent old things from gathering rust, and becoming inert and dull to the mind—in short, to keep the mind alive with the novelty of truth, is the secret of all education, whether secular or religious. It was a profound insight into this truth of education that led our Lord to speak of the scribe instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven as “like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.”

It is a strange conceit, but not unwarranted, that it would be a happy experience if we could for the time being forget all that we have learned of the Bible, and suddenly on a given day, like the finding of Paley’s watch, discover the Book, as it would appear for the first time. The reason for this half-formed wish lies in the fact that the mind likes to indulge itself in surprises. Real lovers of literature understand this perfectly. Imagine, for instance, the charm of the patriarchal stories read for the first time in our present state of knowledge. Or imagine the thrill with which a sensitive person would uncover for the first time the stories of Moses and wandering Israel, of David and his struggles and victories, of the scores of scenes and incidents that make the pages of the Old Testament alive with interest. Or think how memorable the day would

be on which with trembling fingers one would turn for the first time the pages of the fourfold story of Jesus and his Cross—the story that has made the world a new world. Missionaries tell us that just such experiences frequently occur in their work. To the heathen the surprise of Scripture is a literal fact. In a famous passage in his *Short History of the English People* Green recites the story of how an entire people was brought into first contact with the Scripture. It was towards the close of Elizabeth's reign when the Scripture was set up to be read in the hearing of the people, and great crowds came to listen, as its words "fell on ears which custom had not deadened to their force and beauty."\*

The historian's words just quoted very aptly suggest a widespread feeling about the Bible. The ears of many have been deadened to its "force and beauty." *Humdrum* is the word which expresses, for a great many, the mind's attitude towards the Scripture. Familiarity has hardly bred contempt; but custom has at least dulled the edge of novelty. The Bible is an old Book to a multitude, whereas it is calculated, like the books of our childhood, to be ever new and engaging, ever worthy of repeated readings. The natural result has come that very many members of the church have closed the Book, and ceased to search its pages. It does not occur to them that they might go back to the Bible, as Charles Reade went to the Old Testament, to read it as if it were new to them. They do not suspect that coming to the Scripture thus would bring out surprises on

\* Chapter VIII, "On the English Puritans."

many a page. They can hardly conceive that they might grow deeply interested in it, might even become fascinated by things old and new within this treasure-house of the soul. Their teachers also have perhaps but dimly perceived the truth that the inner secret of all methods of teaching lies in the creation of interest; they have scarcely realized that the Book has lost something of its freshness and newness to the people; they have aimed at orthodoxy and scholarship and eloquence, and have too often forgotten that the art of communication, though not careless of these, is to *make for interest in the thing taught.*

It is a patent fact to-day that in this Bible age, this age of vast and far-reaching Christian activity, there are great numbers of believers who need to "find" the Bible. In a different way the surprise of Scripture is needed now as much as it was in Puritan times when the people of England became "a people of a book, and that book was the Bible." If our methods in home and school and pulpit could be directed towards helping the people to read the Book as if it were new to them, if we could do somewhat to destroy the *humdrum* of Bible-reading, if we could even delude the mind by wise and legitimate ways into feeling again the joy of first contact, there might be many to say, "It *is* a new Book to me." There might come indeed a new generation of Bible-lovers into our churches. The church has no greater need than this—that the ears of believers should tingle and the hearts of believers should burn within them with such surprise of Scripture as came to the disciples on the way to Emmaus. It must be

said that from the schools of the prophets down the church is but half awake on this subject.

Certain very practical questions confront us. "Are you not indulging in mere harmless rhapsodies when you speak of the joy of discovering the Book? Does not everybody know the Bible, at least in a general way? Can this surprise of Scripture of which you speak ever become a distinct personal experience? What but a revival of religion itself in the heart can ever remove indifference toward God's Word?"

To the last question it may be said that the order may be and often is reversed, and new interest in the Scripture, even along the less spiritual lines, will sometimes produce interest in the Kingdom of God.\* Not the church only but the world also is sure to profit by new revelations of interest in the Word. It is true that men know the Scripture in a general way, but they know it very often by fragments only;

\* The recent death of the gallant soldier and gifted writer, General Lew Wallace, gives new interest to the story of *Ben Hur*, which has been an aid to faith to many in this generation. The book had already been begun, but the author's plan was not "born of the Spirit," for the author up to this time had given little attention to personal religion. It was after the Cincinnati convention that he rode on the railway with Mr. Ingersoll, whose speech in the convention in nominating Mr. Blaine had added to his fame as an orator. Mr. Ingersoll entered into a tirade against God and Christianity and the Bible. It was not his intention to turn General Wallace's attention to the New Testament; but such was the result. He walked the streets for two hours that night, so the story relates, unable to sleep. Afterwards he began a careful study of the Bible, resulting in a complete change in the plan of *Ben Hur*. General Wallace died with this sentence upon his lips, "I am ready to meet my Maker."

know it as the early settlers on the New England shore knew the vast areas of the American Continent.

The best answer to the question whether this "finding" of Scripture can ever become a joyous personal experience is to point to many instances in which this experience has been real. A recent contributor to the religious press, writing of her literary autobiography, speaks of how the "charm of the Old Testament" claimed attention; of how the "humaneness in such stories as those of Hagar, of Rebecca, of Ruth, of David and Jonathan" dawned upon her; of how in short the Bible became almost a second "other world" to her.

Mr. Forster, the biographer of Charles Dickens, tells the story of a mountaineer in the Sierras, who, away from any white man, "survived on *Nicholas Nickleby* and *David Copperfield*." From these classics he learned life in his solitude. But think of the many instances of men and women, often in lowly circumstances, who have been persons of one book, and that book the Bible. "Beware," says an old adage, "of the man of one book." Men without education have become educated by knowing the Bible. Eminent scholars have more than once been willing to sit as learners at the feet of humble believers who have known in a very intimate and personal way the surprise of Scripture. The poet Heine somewhere speaks of being willing to bow to the superior wisdom of Mrs. Stowe's poor "Uncle Tom." Almost every community has one or more persons who have seen more deeply into the Word than the leaders of the schools. How true is Margaret Howe's deliver-

ance on the Bible, "It's a strange buik the Bible, and no the buik we wud hae made, to judge by oor bit creeds and confessions." It is often dull and mechanical to the lofty spirit, but all life and flexibility to the soul of humble frame.

New teachers have arisen in late years, not more devout, not more learned than other men, who have nevertheless astonished the church and the world with what they have seen in the Bible. Their method, if they have had any method, is to read the Bible as if it were new to them, and their gift as teachers is the gift of surprising the mind with truth, removing the hindrance of unsympathetic knowledge, destroying the humdrum of custom and familiarity. The divine work of recovery is already begun in the call that has come to not a few in this decade to be heralds of a new interest in the Holy Book, teachers some of them of the humanity of the Bible even more than of its divinity, seers in a true sense, from one angle of vision or another, of the unrevealed wealth of the Scripture.\*

It is interesting to note another phase of this subject. There are few ministers who cannot recall some period of leanness in their ministry, when the joy of discovery seemed gone, and the loins of the soul seemed past girding. Such an experience commonly comes to the young minister at the end of the first year. One such went to an elder minister to make the characteristic confession that he seemed

\* The author recalls the case of an intelligent lawyer who, after hearing Professor Richard G. Moulton in a thrilling popular exposition of Job, exclaimed, "Why, I never knew that *that* was in the Bible!"

to have "preached the Bible out," and to receive from the elder man this frank advice: "Dig deeper, young man, dig deeper." Some may have to confess in sadness that all their years in the ministry have been barren, lacking in that element of joyous surprise of which we are speaking. But the phenomenon to which we call particular attention is the experience of recovery. Not a few congregations can testify that they have witnessed in the pulpit a change from leanness to fatness, unmistakable deepening and enriching of the minister's ministrations, a positive growth in freedom and in joy that soon became contagious among the people. The pastor had not gone back to the schools; he had not travelled abroad; he had not broken down any intellectual barrier; he had simply *found the Bible!* His pulpit henceforth became a running fountain. The task of preaching disappeared, and a new note of joy rose above all the din and dust of toil. It was this that the congregation had seen; and it was to them like coming to the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.\*

If every pastor, considering of necessity many and varied problems, might only discover how to make

\* It is not often that the public is permitted to know the history of any such pastoral resuscitation. One such case has been recently described in a little book of semi-autobiography, entitled *How to Master the English Bible*. The author, Dr. James M. Gray, tells very simply the story of how he was led to lay hold of the Book. The sequel in Dr. Gray's remarkable skill as a teacher, and the organization of great union Bible classes in certain of the cities, belongs to current religious history. It can hardly be doubted that many pulpits are suffering a famine of the Word (Amos viii: 11, 12).

his pulpit like Elim in the desert, a place of "twelve wells of water and three score and ten palm trees," he would find many other problems dwindling into insignificance. Let us suppose that a pastor, despite all the learning of the schools that he possesses, should make up his mind to read the Bible as if it were new to him. Suppose that he should come to the Book, determined to know it not technically or mechanically, as an engineer knows every part of a bridge, but to know it with feeling, to develop interest and enthusiasm for it. Suppose that he should daily open his Bible with the thought that he was entering a land of surprises, a sort of Yellowstone Park or Yosemite of the soul. Suppose he should train himself for alertness of discovery, should yield himself easily to the atmosphere, the fascination, of the Book, should make his study a simple matter of following clear pathways into the deep wood, sometimes rejoicing in the green shade, again sitting down by sparkling streams, or again breaking out into open spaces where the sunlight pours in. Suppose further that this should become the method of his ministry, and he should try to make the Bible new to his people. Suppose, in other words, that he should bring such fresh enthusiasm to his work as would invariably create the impression that he had just made unexpected discoveries that he wished to share with the people. We can merely suggest in such indefinite terms as these what we conceive the surprise of Scripture might become for many a minister in his pulpit. For there is *humdrum* in the pulpit, as well as in the pew. The most useful revival that can come to the pastor is a freshened

feeling, a sweeping enthusiasm for the Word of God.

The following are suggested as probable or possible lines upon which a teacher of the Word might proceed, for the purpose of freshening his own enthusiasm and that of others. But let it be remembered that we have described not so much a process, as a spirit, a method which underlies all methods. Whatever will help to make the Bible new and keep it new, whatever will in right ways make men feel that the Bible is an interesting Book, comes within the scope of this idea. Any teacher possessed with the idea of making the Book a passion of the soul will find suggestions multiplying in his mind.

1. The surprise of Scripture will often come in a very natural way by *frequent readings*. The Bible is a Book that yields its sweets to the persistent visitor. Some one has said that we are in the habit of reading the Scripture as cows pasture in the meadow—trampling many flowers under foot. One cannot expect to see all the beauty of a landscape at a single glance; neither can one grasp the full meaning of a book of the Bible upon a single hasty reading. Experience proves that the simplest of all ways of studying the Scripture is to read, and to read again, and again, and again. Certain passages we have read a hundred times without finding any special message. Read them again. The one hundred and first time may bring a flash of recognition, when the heart will exclaim, "It is greater than I knew and deeper than I understood." The bane of Bible-reading is haste. The newspaper habit follows us

into our devotions. To know this great classic of the soul, one must be content to be often in its presence, to linger long within its charm. Select a passage or a book of the Bible and practise upon it by many repetitions, like a musician at the piano, until its song has become the song of the heart.\* This only is justice to the Word of God.

2. Training one's self *in observation* is another fruitful means of "finding" the Bible. No book requires greater alertness. Here as everywhere it is the wide-open eye and heart that see the most. Yet this is not at all a question of expertness. It is rather a question of eagerness or appetite. One who really desires to see will be rewarded. It is a matter of keeping one's eyes open and looking about. A journey into the woods with a real lover of nature—what a delight it is. The flash of color in the plumage of a strange bird is sure to catch his eye; the bark and leaves of trees tell their story to him of sun and wind; the dim marks of the nimble feet of little denizens of the forest cannot escape his notice. "Some men see more in a day's trip in the Hampton coach," said old Dr. Johnson, "than other men see in a journey through Europe." Our thought is that we must come to the Scripture with desire, with the eagerness, with the curiosity and open-eyed observation of children. Is it not remarkable with what apparent dulness of faculties men often come to the Word of God? It is little wonder that

\* A remarkable case is cited by Dr. Gray in his little book, *How to Master the English Bible*, of a layman who read and re-read the Epistle to the Ephesians until he seemed visibly to "sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus."

they find so little to feed their interest. But when once the mind of discovery is awake, new light dawns at every step of the way.

3. And this suggests that fresh interest comes with the *undiscovered things* of the Scripture. It has been the experience of some who thought they knew the Bible, to find that they were only going up and down its beaten tracks. Later they came to see that there are scores and hundreds of little paths that lead to undiscovered things in the Word. No literary delight is greater than that of breaking into the little secrets of the Book. To many the Bible is in this sense absolutely new. If the minister in his pulpit should determine on one or more days to desert the highways and turn aside into some by-path of Scripture, he would find his congregation literally fascinated by the surprise and novelty of the Book which they supposed they knew so well. A well-known lecturer who has been for more than a generation on the American platform relates with evident relish that when he takes his illustrations and incidents from the newspapers, the people cry "enough," but when he draws upon the Bible the people prick up their ears and listen as to something entirely fresh and new. Like many things that God has made, the Bible has outstanding force and beauty that every eye can see. Then it has also little corners and crevices where beauty blooms for the patient eye. The author of a book on the Desert calls attention to the fact not only that the desert has flowers, but also that the desert flowers have their petals turned edgewise toward the sun, to protect them from the heat. There are desert places in

the Bible; yet even there some hidden grace may appear. The sixteenth chapter of Romans, for example, a chapter of obscure names, might furnish luminous material for a discussion of "The Ministry of the Unknown." There are whole sections of the Book that are *terra incognita* even to many intelligent persons. He who can conduct well-planned excursions upon occasion into these unknown parts may be sure of a delighted following.

4. Its *variety* is another revelation of surprise that is in store for one who will come with the real enthusiasm of discovery to the Book. They who have imagined the Bible to be dull have scarcely realized how much is in it. Popular education in this vast literature has been painfully inadequate. The range of preaching has been too limited, it has not sufficiently presented the swift coruscations, the manifold permutations of the Word. Let any minister inspect his sermons of ten or twenty years. He will almost certainly be surprised to find how narrow has been the sweep of his preaching, in comparison with the breadth and variety of the material. None have stated the variety of Scripture better than Canon Farrar. "Touched by one of these many fingers our hearts cannot but respond. At the turning of a page, we may listen to Solomon the magnificent, or Amos the herdsman, or Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian conqueror, or Matthew, the Galilean publican. If St. Paul be too difficult for us, we have the practical plainness of St. Peter; if St. John soar too high for us on the eagle wings of his mysticism, we can rejoice in the simple sweetness of St. Luke; if we find the Apocalypse too passionate and energetic,

we can rest in the homely counsels of St. James." But the variety of Scripture also regards the needs and moods of men. There are "shallows which the lamb can ford as well as depths which the elephant must swim. There is Poetry for the student, History for the statesman, Psalms for the Temple, and Proverbs for the Mart. There are appeals, denunciations, arguments, stories of battle, songs of love. There are mountains and valleys, shadow and sunshine, calm and tempest, stormy waves and still waters, lilies of green pastures and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." With such variety of material as is afforded in the sweep of the Book from Genesis to Malachi, from Matthew to Revelation, with such multiplied points of contact, and such diversified appeals, it must be said that the teacher of such a book has inherited a veritable Golconda. He, however, who would bring home the wealth of the Indies must take the wealth of the Indies with him. Therefore let the teacher know well the pathways of the Book, that being himself an interested guide, he may lead others with delight into its varied store.

5. The *human kinship* and the *spiritual imperative* of the Book constitute its strongest element of surprise. Opening a book which is called God's Book, we find that it is also man's book. The humanity of Scripture constantly takes us unawares. It is a great book of the heart that seems to have felt all the loves and fears of men in all ages; seems to have shared their dangers, suffered their woes, and indulged their high hopes. "The power of all the griefs and trials of man," said Faber, "is hidden be-

neath its words." Abraham buying the cave of Machpelah to "bury his dead out of his sight"; Boaz in the idyllic picture of Ruth coming out to the field in the morning and greeting his reapers, "The Lord be with you," and receiving their greeting in return, "The Lord bless thee"; Elijah seated under the juniper tree and crying out in his despair, "It is enough"; Isaiah bringing the gospel to the heart in terms of the "wells of salvation"; Amos, the embodiment of spiritual courage, standing unabashed before the priest of Bethel; Paul with his last pen-strokes sending for his cloke and books—a Book that contains such pictures as these is pre-eminently a Book of human sympathies. It is within reason to say that no element of human experience is left without some record here. Like the poet who stirred a Roman audience to applause, the Bible looks out upon life to say, "There is nothing human that fails to interest me." Yet even as we dwell upon its human sympathy, we realize that a higher light constantly breaks through and envelops persons and incidents. It is the swift vision of a spiritual life. It is the true idealism of life coming upon the heels of its true realism. No book is so realistic, none is so idealistic, as the Bible. From a window in the armory at Warwick Castle in England, the traveller looks out upon a beautiful vista of the Avon, begirt by trees and spanned by a bridge beyond, seeming to say to the heart, "There is more than man here; God is also here." The greatest surprise of all in the Scripture is the sudden vistas in the history, in personal life or incident, where the heart sees God. The highest art of the teacher lies

here, to open up these vistas, to bring these quick but abiding impressions to the mind, to lay this vast and varied literature under tribute to the growth of the Kingdom of God in the Soul.

## IV.

### THE RELIGIOUS USE OF IMAGINATION\*

THE Bible is not a Book *of* the imagination. Nevertheless it is pre-eminently a Book *for* the imagination. In this statement lies the suggestion of many methods of handling the Book. Still more it suggests a possible solution of the whole problem of *appreciation*. If men could be brought to regard the Bible with *lively* interest, they would more readily adopt it as their *vade mecum*. Now the existence of "lively interest" is somehow dependent upon the presence of imagination. We are accustomed to explain the dulness or indifference of men in the most ordinary affairs by saying that they are "unimaginative." We see how necessary it is that men should realize what they know, have a living picture of truth before the mind, feel keenly, to the point of resolution and action, the things that are presented to the inward eye of the soul. The function of the imagination was once imaginatively stated by Horace Bushnell in an inspiring moment of conversation

\* The title of this chapter is the exact title of a recent volume by Professor E. H. Johnson of Crozer Theological Seminary. Professor Johnson's discussion is penetrative and suggestive at every point, reminding one not a little of Horace Bushnell. His discussion, however, does not include the consideration of imagination as a faculty of appreciation in reading and handling the Bible, which is our purpose here.

with a friend. When God made man he declared that his work was well done. But God considered his work, and added, "No, man is not finished; there is no way into his soul large enough to admit me. I will open in him the great door of imagination, that I may go to him and he may come to me." The truth thus luminously stated comes to meet us in very practical affairs. It is evident that there is some faculty of the mind which rightly used makes life seem more to us than before. It works apparently by a process of giving intense reality to the truth of life. The leaders of men in every line of activity possess this power. It is the architectonic element in genius; and it is also the faculty of common minds that clothes even feeble incidents of life with reality and dignity. An indescribable dulness possesses the soul that lacks the enlivenment of imagination. Sir Walter Scott told a friend that he thought he could be happy even though the rest of his days should be spent in a dungeon. No prison, he said, could confine his thought or limit the power of his imagination.

It was Napoleon who said: "Imagination rules the world"; while a recent English critic affirms that "the cause of the failure of some of the English generals is lack of imagination, the inability to realize the courage and resource of the enemy, to realize situations." A well-known writer includes in a volume of essays on man's social value, an essay on "Imagination as the architect of manhood"; and another boldly asserts that "Imagination is the very secret and marrow of civilization." No great labor of man, whether the building of a bridge or the build-

ing of an institution, is accomplished without it.\* The most exact of the sciences, mathematics, must needs claim the help of imagination. The higher truths of number can only be grasped by means of symbols. The ability to project one's thoughts out into infinite spaces is indispensable to the student of the universe. Kepler felt that in the study of astronomy, he was "thinking God's thoughts after him." It was essentially the lack of imagination that hampered the student in the college classroom, who questioned the professor's statement that two parallel lines must continue in the same relation infinitely. "I cannot see that," was his naïve confession. Professor Tyndall in his address on the "Scientific Use of the Imagination," insists that the mysteries of nature can be penetrated by the use of scientific imagination. The action of nature long ago, for example, in the formation of a river delta, can be reproduced to the mind's eye. "Newton's passage from a falling apple to a falling moon was, at the outset, a leap of the prepared imagination." The very foundations of physical science exist in the first instance in the imagination. Who has ever seen the ether? Who has ever grasped an atom?†

\* "To the use of clear images," says Henry Turner Bailey, "by the imagination, associative, penetrative, and contemplative (to use Ruskin's words), we must attribute all the progress of mankind in discovery, in science, in manufacture, commerce, and the arts. Every Homer, every Cæsar, every St. Francis, every Galileo, every Columbus, every Washington, every Edison, every Astor, comes to his place of leadership through the ordered activity of the imagination."

† See this thought amplified in *The Religious Use of Imagination*, by Professor Johnson, p. 25.

To the scientist these invisible elements of the world's life are plainly evident. It is his inner eye that sees them. Even the ordinary love of nature is fed by the imagination. The lover of nature is said to *enter* into her moods, to *see* her secondary meanings, to *realize* or *sense* her invisible parts.

It is in those spheres of human labor where the communication of thought from one mind to another is the main business, that imagination is most of all indispensable. No form of literature can be wholly emancipated from it. Its domain is not poetry alone, the most imaginative form of literature. History also, the most matter-of-fact form of literature, is not free from the spell of imagination. The historian must see the past and make it real both to his own and to other minds; else history will be, to use Coleridge's language in *The Ancient Mariner*, like "a painted ship upon a painted ocean." Oratory is tame without imagination. The orator must *grasp* a situation for himself, and must then help his hearers to grasp it. The failure in public speech is usually the failure to bring the minds of the audience into living contact with the subject. The speaker does not make them *see* the truth. Conversation even is dull and unenlivening if the imagination is not present to open vistas for the mind, to strike fire upon the anvil of the soul. Teaching and preaching, the most useful forms of public utterance known, are constantly dependent upon this enlivening faculty of the mind.

"Interest is the greatest word in education." So says a prominent educator. Interest is the child of

imagination. It might almost be said to be another name for imagination. Interest is the mind alert, the mind at attention, the mind open-eyed and searching with a thousand questions into truth. It is imagination that prompts all this. How familiar are the facts here in the study of child life. Interest the child in a subject, and he will see double what he saw before. Or, state it the other way, help him to see, and his interest will grow. "There is no fine art that does not rest on imagination," says one who is a teacher of teachers. "The art of imagination," he adds, speaking of teaching, "is our great business." Another authority says, "Most teachers fail through lack of imaginative power." The famous Dr. Guthrie affirmed that preaching contains but three elements, to *prove*, to *paint*, to *persuade*. Truth must first be made to appear as truth; then it must be seen by the mind as alive, vivid, active, real, laid like a coal of fire on the heart's altar; then it must be seen as an irresistible force leading to conclusions. The place assigned to imagination, midway between demonstration and conclusion, is very important. It is the function of the imagination to take truth and make it stand forth in the mind "clothed in living green."

We are indebted to Horace Bushnell for the definite recognition of the place of imagination in religious thought. He gave to one of his sermons the title "The Gospel a Gift to the Imagination." More than any other preacher of his day, Bushnell revealed the psychological framework of religion; and his influence is discernible to-day, especially with those thinkers who are bent upon identifying the

religious life of man with the profoundest facts and factors of his intellectual existence.\*

It is now a familiar thought, though none too familiar, that religion has to do with every faculty of the mind. The great doctrines of the church, for example, lie cold and dormant in the heart, except as some faculty, operating in close kinship to imagination, gives them reality and personal imperative. Such an one as the Apostle Paul even, all built of logic and precision, surprises us on many a page by the penetrations of his spiritual imagination. Witness, for instance, his interpretation of the Resurrection of Christ. It is first of all a great outstanding Fact; but the Apostle's insight discerns much more than mere fact in the Resurrection. His mind, by one of those transitions which are ever giving new meaning to life, carries the Resurrection over from the realm of Fact to the realm of personal force. The Christian is intimately concerned in the Resurrection, not only as a fact to be believed, but as a Power to be experienced. This is an insight—still more a reconstructive act—of imagination. It is

\* Dr. Bushnell seems to regard faith and imagination as closely akin. Writing to his wife near the end of his life, he said: "I have had some delightful times and passages since I came here, such as I never had before. I never so saw God—never had him come so broadly, clearly out." The words remind one of the New Testament definition of Faith, as "The assurance (margin, the giving substance to) of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen." Professor Johnson in *The Religious Use of Imagination*, p. 152, argues that the New Testament writer is not here defining faith as trust, but "as that which is the condition of trust, namely, a lively sight of unseen realities." God must first come "broadly, clearly out"—this is the high art of imagination as an aid to faith—then trust is easy.

seeing an underlying truth and building it up into new and more important forms. Paul, the Apostle, teaches that believers are to live the "risen life"—a conception of faith which has been built up out of the rising of Christ from the dead. Truth must receive these human and personal adaptations or interpretations; otherwise it will remain apart from life, helpless in relation to its task.

It is clear that by imagination we mean no light and careless power of the mind. It may be true that Fancy is "imagination at sport"; but Imagination is a very different thing from Fancy. Says Henry Austin:

"Fancy is a bird in a bower  
Of careless play: Imagination—Art!"

It is true that imagination requires delicate treatment lest it may end in the vagaries of fancy. "The imagination," says Dr. John Watson, "is like a certain fish, which was poisonous at one end of an island, and not poisonous at the other end, and the cause of the difference lay in the food by which it was fed." Bushnell carefully guards against confusing imagination and fancy. "Imagination," he says, "is not a kind of ornamental, mind's milliner faculty, that excels in the tricking out of subjects in high-wrought metaphoric draperies." It is not mere poetic sense; it is insight. It is the power of the mind by which the mind sees more than is visible. The lack of it was described by Jesus when he spoke of those who see and yet see not. But insight is not all of imagination. It is also a reconstructive faculty. In this aspect it is the mind laying hold upon

a fact or principle, an incident, a person—and so reconstructing it by a mental process as to make it a new order of truth for life. Thus, for instance, a personality of history becomes an energy of the soul, is wrought into a rubric of faith, is reconstructed into a type of life. It is when thus rightly understood that imagination is seen to have a religious use. No man can make the most of religion for himself and the world about him until he has clothed it in reality, invested it with familiarity and companionship. Professor Johnson rightly speaks of the failure of some believers to realize the facts of religion as a "mental indolence which turns their hearts cold towards their Lord, and leaves their lives inert and useless." \*

What, then, has imagination to do with the Bible? We return to our first statement—the Bible is not a Book of the imagination, nevertheless it is pre-eminently a Book *for* the imagination. It did not grow up out of, it is not a product of, the imagination. At the same time it is a contribution to the imagination, using the term in the sense already defined as the faculty of insight and reconstruction. Its appeal, considering the nature of its contents, is to the realizing sense of the mind. To some the Bible, though always admirable, has not yet come as the Book of Life; with others it is the Book which apart from all others has *found* the soul. Of all books, the Bible is calculated to come closest to life, because it furnishes such varied and rich material for the imagination.

Bearing in mind what has been said about imagi-

\* *The Religious Use of Imagination*, p. 199.

nation and its relation to religion, let us now take account of its helpfulness in the study of the Book.

1. Its first use is general, affecting the attitude of the mind toward the Book. What does the mind think about the Bible? How does it feel toward the Bible? What responses are awakened in the heart by the Bible? In short—is the impressionistic effect of the Book upon the mind compounded of lively sensations, active interest, and hearty affection? It is in the highest degree important that men should have a hearty *feeling* about the Book. It should somehow appeal to them as no other book does. It should appear to the mind as composed of the most impressive and inviting realities. In other words, the Scripture can never win its way with the mind, without a realizing sense of what the Scripture is. The first proposition with which the mind has to do is in this form—*This is God's Book*. Now this proposition may stand before the mind merely as a technical reality, or a theological conclusion, and as such it may yield little of vital feeling. The very first duty of the mind is to realize what the Bible is, to interpret the above proposition in the terms of insight and feeling, to build it up by the reconstructive power of imagination into its true magnitude for the heart. To deliver the mind from shrunken conceptions, to produce vital feelings in the mind, to expel coldness, formality and dulness, and to create warmth and interest—this is the task of imagination. To say that the Bible is God's Book must mean for us a very vital thing, producing a mental excitement, a spiritual *verve*, such as may easily swing open all the doorways of the heart. Consulting our experi-

ence, we know at once that the above proposition is not a truth established by controversy, nor a truth dependent solely upon a theory of inspiration. We see that it is a truth so vital as to escape imprisonment in terms and formulæ. We insist, therefore, that the primary force obtained by the Book in our minds rests in its appeal to the mind's realizing sense, in other words, the imagination. We may confidently affirm that the divine Author of the Book is more concerned in the first instance to have us grasp the vital force and possibility of the proposition—*This is God's Book*—than he is to have us analyze the proposition into terms and theories.

2. The imagination must deal in like manner with a companion proposition—*This is man's Book*. This may be said about every book that is of worth, that contains a real message. As applied to the Bible, however, it must receive manifold interpretations, and indescribable intensifications. It is an odd conceit to speak of "my Homer," or "my Shakespeare," or "my Tennyson." It is very common to hear men speak of "my Bible." Behind the expression there is—there ought to be—something more than the fact of formal ownership. There is also an affirmation of the fact of mental and spiritual ownership. This Book has moved in upon the mind and has possessed me, so that I in turn have come to possess it. The task of verifying, of rehabilitating, in new and fascinating modes, this truth of the essential and far-reaching humanity of the Scripture, is the task of imagination. One result of its work is that we come to live in the Book with a feeling of comfortable familiarity toward it. Feelings of unreality disap-

pear. There seems no longer anything unnatural or extraneous in having God's Book as the companion of our life. The sense of distance is destroyed; the supernatural comes by easy and natural modes to inhabit the mind. Thus the two propositions, *This is God's Book*, and *This is Man's Book*, come to be concentric circles, with their centre in the deepest insight of the heart, where are born both its Faith and its Love.

3. The next step for the mind is to *bring out* the main contents of the Scripture. This is a painter's term, and very much of the portrait-painter's art consists in the ability to make the characteristic features of the subject stand forth. Vandyke painted three portraits of the King, with the thought that three would represent better than one the impression produced by the monarch. Cromwell would have his wart painted that men might not miss even a characteristic detail. The painter who should give slight attention to the deep furrows in Lincoln's face, would be guilty of overlooking the feature that is most truly characteristic of one who bore a heavier weight of sorrow than any other man of his generation. Landseer is the greatest painter of animals because his imagination seizes upon the sincerest truths of animal life. Turner is nearest of all to nature because his imaginative genius succeeds in transferring the atmosphere of things to canvas. The question to be asked here concerning the Bible is: What does it stand for most of all? What are its outstanding facts? What are its most impressive truths? God, Man, Sin, Righteousness, Heaven, Hell, Salvation—these are the main facts

of Scripture. From beginning to end the Scripture is charged with the task of presenting these realities with the utmost vividness to the mind. The mind in turn is charged with the duty of responding by every one of its faculties, so that these facts of the Revelation may be, not merely cold terms, but living realities. The psychologic term, an old term with new uses, for the mental process involved is *apperception*. These great ideas of the Scripture are not merely to be perceived; they are to be *apperceived*, they are to stir our inner consciousness with the excitement of vital truth, they are to become henceforth a veritable part of our life furniture.\* The main truths of the Scripture are calculated to appeal very powerfully to the mind, because they are in the truest sense living truths. Yet it is also true that the mind must take hold of these truths actively, and let them live and grow in the heart. Imagination, being the faculty by which the mind obtains insight and at the same time builds new forms and adaptations of truth, is thus in constant vogue with an appreciative reader of the Bible.

The idea of God, for instance—the mind must take active hold of this idea, and work it out into vital adaptations. The form of the Revelation is everywhere favorable to this process. God is revealed in the Scripture, not abstractly, but concretely, in order that the imagination may be assisted both to

\* "The Gospel is educative because its Teacher put its truth before men in a form to be apperceived, to become, not a part of man's mental store, but a part of his mental life. The words of Plato are a priceless treasure, but the words of Jesus are spirit and are life."—*Educational Evangelism*, by Charles E. McKinley, p. 120.

grasp and to use the idea. God saying "Let there be light," God "walking in the garden in the cool of the day," God speaking to men in visions and dreams, God in the Shekinah of the Tabernacle—are not these every one handles, so to say, for God, by which the imagination, or faith of man, may lay hold of the idea and translate it into experience? Read the story of Jacob, for instance, and his experience at Bethel, in the light of this suggestion. Jacob was already a believer in God, but like many modern Jacobs, his faith was at best technical: it was as yet unilluminated, and unpictorial: it was not yet gripped in consciousness; it had never been vividly sealed by experience. After the experience at Bethel, Jacob recorded his new grasp of the idea of God in this far-reaching sentence: "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." We have only to remember that the form of the experience was adapted to an old-world mind, and we can see that Jacob's experience was a representative one. It was in effect the same experience that Bushnell describes in his life, when God came "broadly, clearly out." There can be no doubt that what many men need is a quickened perception—an apperception—of God.

To the imagination, moreover, assisted by the matter and mode of Scripture, is given the task of seeing Sin, getting an insight into its true nature, transferring the idea potently to the fighting arena of life—in short, realizing sin. Here again the method of the Scripture is not abstract, but concrete, furnishing innumerable points of contact and interpretations to experience. How vivid the pages of the Book in their effort to present to our imagina-

tion the real qualities of sin. It is sufficient to refer to the two instances that are charged with the greatest meaning. The Scene of Temptation in the Garden of Eden is a picture which no criticism can rub off the canvas of human life. Some are pleased to doubt its historical verity. Nevertheless the picture, like Banquo's ghost, will not down. Imagination returns again and again to the scene, always with the assurance that there is a vital truth here with which men must reckon. Still more impressive is the scene of Temptation with which the New Testament opens, wherein a picture is presented that is deeply incorporated in the spiritual history of mankind. As the imagination easily sees (even when intellect and will rebel) that the Fall of Man in the Garden has been extended with baleful effect into human life; still more easily does imagination see that the victory of Jesus in his threefold temptation has been perpetuated as a living force in the every-day life of men. Pictured in the light of these two representative scenes, the victory of sin over man, and the victory of the Son of Man over sin, it is impossible for any thoughtful soul to remain indifferent to sin. The great books of the imagination, some one has said, are written in invisible ink. The writing comes out even as the mind, using its most active powers, dwells upon it.

4. It is to the imagination that we must look for deliverance from what Bushnell calls the "humdrum of a grubbing literalism." At one time—even now in a much less degree—the Bible was made the victim of the allegorizing tendency. Men let loose their fancy to run at will in the sacred pages. That it

was spiritual fancy made it none the less dangerous. Yet this reign of allegory in the interpretation of Scripture is less harmful than the dry-as-dust precision, which measures and weighs and tests and criticises, until the spirit and flavor of the Book are crushed beneath mechanical and literalistic emphasis. It is not our purpose to underestimate the value of scientific study of the Scripture; but we insist that the Bible deserves a more generous treatment. It was a dictum of Pascal that the Christian on his knees sees farther than the philosopher on tip-toe; and we have all known persons who saw very deeply into the meaning of the Bible, wholly unaided by critical methods. This is essentially a work of imagination, which is nature's compensation to ordinary minds for the lack of scientific precision. It is profoundly true that the Bible is a Book for the average mind. There is a penalty of intellectuality against which every reverent scholar should seek to protect himself—it is the departure of feeling. Darwin's famous lament that his long surrender to the study of nature's facts had dwarfed his soul at other points, so that, for instance, he had lost his early taste for music, is a fair illustration. A leading scientist of the day delivers a striking message to scientific men on this subject—"To keep his mind sweet, the modern scientific man should be saturated with the Bible and Plato, with Homer, Shakespeare, and Milton; to see life through their eyes may enable him to strike a balance between the rational and the emotional, which is the most serious difficulty of the intellectual life."\* Now our argument

\* *Science and Immortality*, Dr. Wm. Osler, p. 42.

for the Book is that it must have its way with the heart; and this is only another way of saying that it is a Book for the imagination. The large poetic element in Scripture is alone a sufficient vindication of this statement. There are incidents of the Old Testament that seem to us uncertain in the light of modern criticism. But it is just as certain that the light of modern criticism is not all-sufficient for such incidents. The truth that is resident in them may often be felt in the heart, even though the critical judgment may rise up against them. David's numbering the people, for example, and the penalty that ensued, awakens at once our critical judgment. At the same time we know that a stronger, more luminous lesson has never been given against the Pride of Success, against the habit of esteeming Quantity above Quality. Imagination takes the lesson and works it out into life. No logic of criticism can prevent the appeal to the facts of life. The principle of *argumentum ad hominem* clips the wings of criticism. We cannot doubt that Jesus claimed for his gospel a more generous treatment than that of mere intellectual criticism and "grubbing literalism"—even the sympathetic and penetrative perceptions of a chastened imagination—when he said, "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

5. What it means to read the Bible sympathetically, with an ever-ready grasp of the imagination, will become plainer when we add that the fascination of the Book comes with a real effort to imagine the situations that are presented to view. How is it that to some the Bible seems to be veritably a liv-

ing Book? They are on terms of friendship with the men and women who figure in its pages. The incidents recorded seem to them to be events of yesterday. The scenes depicted appear to them to be part of the unfolding drama of human life. The history is alive with interest; the biography is as if the printed page were still wet; the epistles are letters written up-to-date. It must be that they who cherish this feeling of nearness in the Bible have obtained it through the process of reading themselves into the Book, putting themselves into the history and the situations—in short, filling the gap of time and distance by imagination. Harriet Prescott Spofford says: "A little volume of *Pilgrim's Progress*, bound in red morocco, used to lie under my pillow when I was some five years old, to be read with the first dawn's light; and all my life since then the people and places of its pages, Greatheart and Christian, the House Beautiful, the Chamber looking to the East, have been as real to me as the people I have met and the places I have seen, while its atmosphere and influence have never left me." This is how we should read the Bible, making its people and places real to the mind. The ethical and spiritual force of this process of taking up into the imagination the best things of literature is a recognized element in education. Adam Clarke, the biblical scholar, is reported to have said that he had learned from *Robinson Crusoe* more of all that which makes for righteousness than from any other book except the Bible. The material of the Bible exceeds every other book in this grasp of the heart. The story of Joseph, for instance—many volumes could not tell

of the effects wrought in human history by this simple narrative of the Old Testament.

6. Dare one speak of imagination in relation to Jesus Christ and Salvation? There is abundant warrant for doing so. "Is Jesus a real person to you? Is the Cross a realizable fact to you?" It is admitted that such questions as these have the highest pertinence. They suggest again the function of imagination. That the New Testament begins with a fourfold story of the life of Christ is a fact of the greatest significance. It is clearly intended that the picture of Christ should be an active factor in our faith. The request with which the Greeks came to the disciples, "Sir, we would see Jesus," is the perpetual need of faith, for Christianity inheres in his Person. The Gospels furnish the greatest of all fields for the imagination, because one cannot take a single step in them without meeting the Person whose story they unfold. As we read the four biographies, does Jesus emerge from history and stand out before the mind? Does he become to us sweetly companionable as the Friend of sinners? Do the scenes of his life seem actual and near, as if they were recounted of one whom we know? Do we seem to take our places among his disciples and follow the Master from Judea to Galilee, and into Samaria, by the lake, and to the mountain-top? These questions show us how necessary it is that one should read the story of Christ's life with such sympathy and insight as imagination can furnish. Yes, it is true, we are to imagine Christ. And the Cross also, as the tragic climax of his life. Imagination, as faith's assistant, takes the divine act of self-sacrifice.

fice on the Cross and brings it into contact with Sin. Bunyan's imagination sees the effect of the Cross so clearly that he draws a picture in his great Allegory of the pilgrim travelling with a burden on his back, only to have the burden slip away from him at sight of the Cross and go rolling into a near-by cavity like a tomb. To the natural heart the Cross is a stumbling-block, but imagination clothes it with divine reality and potency. Yes, we are to imagine the Cross, to gain insight into its meaning, and to reconstruct the fact into the spiritual reality of personal salvation.

7. Abundant suggestion to the teacher and the preacher is contained in the foregoing considerations. The point to be insisted upon is that the function of one who teaches the Bible is, not merely to communicate its contents to other minds, but to make its contents live, to give to them for others the savor of interest, of feeling, of life. The great preachers are always men of imagination. They see truth *en large*, they discern its pictorial values, they are able to rehabilitate it for every-day use. They see Jesus walking, not only in Judea and Galilee, but also on the streets of our towns, up and down the church aisles, and the corridors of hospitals and prisons. All who teach the Scripture need most of all to cultivate the sense of reality. There is one very simple rule for all who communicate the Word. Give the lesson a body, which is the form of teaching. But do not fail to breathe into the body the breath of life, by which are meant interest, feeling, power, inspiration—most of all, reality. Imagination lies very close to the heart.

## V

## THE ZEST OF HISTORY

IT is our special task to point out the qualities of the Scripture that make for interest, and to indicate some methods by which the teacher and preacher may avail themselves of these qualities. Fundamental to all of these is the value of history.

“To understand anything we must know its history.”\* Yet the writer of this terse sentence is careful to recognize that understanding is not the chief benefit of history. “The study of history,” he adds, “is chiefly valuable for its moral significance and influence.” Its greater and more potent work lies in “helping to excite the emotions and move the will,” in stirring to activity “the forces and agencies that build up character, that indicate duty and that prompt action.” No study of the interest of the Bible for mankind and of the methods for fixing that interest more strongly upon the mind, is complete without the recognition of two facts: *the place which history holds in the natural education of mind and heart, and the place which history holds in the Bible.*

As a matter of fact the “historical spirit” is a constant factor in popular education. The feeling, if not the love, for history, is almost universal. The rise of the historical school so-called is the belated

\* *History, Prophecy and the Monuments*, by J. F. McCurdy, vol. i, p. 8.

recognition upon the part of scholars of a tendency of the mind. This general appreciation of the historical form is not of course technical or scientific. It is more properly described as "a feeling." It is almost to be classed among the instincts of the mind. Historians are few, indeed real students of history are also few; yet the thought of the people in general easily falls into historical moulds. The strength of this feeling is in reality a measure of enlightenment. Unenlightened peoples are content with unrecorded traditions, loosely connecting the Present with the Past; enlightened nations observe that the Present is under the dominion of the Past, and for them History is an effort to measure and interpret the influence of yesterday upon to-day. Historical study is basal and constructive; the mind is bound to ask, *What is the testimony of experience?*

The reasons for the popular appreciation of history are found in such motives as these; the mind's joy in the contact with facts, the satisfaction of continuity, the impression of purpose, the force of example, the strength of action. There are three things that the mind loves; narration, picture, and motion. History obtains value from each of these. It is in form a narrative, presenting facts, incidents, and persons in the interesting sequence of a story; it is pictorial to the extent of depicting scenes and persons for the mind's eye to see; and it represents motion in that unlike the Ancient Mariner's "painted ship upon a painted ocean," it represents real persons engaged in real action. The heart craves reality. The modern historical novel is spoken of as a new product. In truth it is a revival, a reversion to

type. Fiction always confesses its dependence upon fact; the dramas and tragedies of Shakespeare are historical. The whole background of thought, indeed, as expressed in the literature of enlightened peoples, is historical. We are always carrying the facts of life back into the light of the Past; and just as constantly widening the light of the Past by the light of the Present. The element of solidity is lost out of the people's thought, when they are not trained in history.

The simplest forms of historical study are geography and chronology. These have been called "the two eyes of history." It amounts to saying that no one can see the Past without the aid of these eyes. Geography is the solid ground of history; chronology is the chain of history. There is nothing more awakening than intelligent map study, and there is no more valuable contribution to rudimentary historical knowledge than skilful map-making. A well-made map of modern Africa, for instance, tells the story to the eye of how a continent has been cut into slices in a generation.\* It is conceivable that the study of geography might be made a far more efficient means of promoting general historical knowledge than is usually the case.† Dr. Edward Everett

\* The author found it easy on one occasion to interest a large audience in a rudely drawn map showing "The Partition of Africa." It was a lesson in current history, with plentiful opportunities to illustrate Providence; besides it was an unconscious lesson in modern missions.

† Mr. John R. Mott, in his recently printed plea for leadership in world evangelization entitled, *The Pastor and Modern Missions*, finds the first element of mission strategy at the opening of the twentieth century in the great developments of geography. He

## 74 THE FASCINATION OF THE BOOK

Hale writes: "My mother used to say that hanging a map in front of a pulpit marked an era in the religion of the country."

Chronology is equally illuminating, the popular feeling to the contrary that dates are dry. The helpfulness of chronology as a means of popular understanding of history is in the fact that it constitutes the links of a chain. It has been said that the whole of human history could be represented in outline by twenty dates strung like beads upon a string. Such knowledge of history might be largely panoramic; it would certainly be no more than an outline. Yet even such knowledge is unquestionably interpretative. There is always popular response to the skilful handling of dates. Lacking the desire to penetrate into many details of history, the popular mind rejoices in the feeling of mastery that comes with the large understanding of crises and eras in the unfolding of the human drama. Successful teachers of history are never careless of the strategy of numbers.

The body of historical study is the formal narrative that conveys the story, or history proper. The point that concerns us here is that historical narrative is not necessarily dull and unenlivening. History of all studies is the most interesting, especially because it is the record of action. The philosophy of history, to be sure, makes heavier draughts upon the strength and interest of the mind, because it undertakes the interpretation of action. Ordinary history, however, affords the fullest opportunity for

quotes Livingstone, "The end of the geographical feat is only the beginning of the enterprise," p. 3.

fascinating the mind. Macaulay's *History of England*, Green's *Short History of the English People*, Froude's *Historical Essays*, Parkman's *American Histories*, are notable examples of the fascination of history. The pedagogical rule is that the history-loving period begins between the ages of ten and twelve. In other words, the child's "historical spirit" awakens about this time. A demand for the background of fact begins to assert itself; a definite appreciation of sequence in action appears. Now given a writer or teacher who understands the charm of history, and is able to communicate something of its contagion, and the interest of the mind seldom fails to respond. Skilfully handled, history, with the average mind, is fairly irresistible.

The truth of these remarks is strongly accentuated in the case of Biography and Autobiography, in which history reaches its highest ornament and value. It is sufficient to call attention to the popularity of the biographical element in history. Men love to see life in the making, even as students are fascinated with the shooting of crystals in the glass, and the combining of elements in the flask. The poet Longfellow wrote in his diary one day: "Of all kinds of history, I like biography the best, the story of how men accomplish their task in the world." Plutarch's *Lives* has never lost its charm. It has been called "the pasturage of great minds." Certain biographies are regarded as monumental, such as Boswell's *Johnson*, Cæsar's *Commentaries*, Franklin's *Autobiography*. While it is true that literature is more often mediocre in biography than anywhere else, a really great biography is always received with

gratitude as a contribution to human happiness.\* It is history dropping precept and teaching by example. It is the incarnation of force and faith. It is the arena of life peopled by men who act out their part visibly in our presence, showing us both by success and failure the possibilities of endeavor. A traveller in the northern woods drew a child of the forest to his side one day and held him deeply interested for an hour as he related to him the story of Garfield, the martyred President. It was the opening of a new world of thought to the boy. Education began to invite him, and soon the doors of the college opened to him. The spell of history is not infrequently the coming of the dawn to the mind.

So much may be said about the place of history in the natural education of the mind. To the educator it is a fact of great significance that the race in general is found to be possessed with a real zest for history. It would be the height of folly to try to construct our educational systems without making due provision for this universal taste.

Let us now inquire concerning *the place of history in the Bible*. Is there any natural correspondence between the divine and human methods of education? Do we find the Bible regarding this natural zest for history? Does the Scripture make ample provision for the fascination of the mind with the interest of history? And what wise use may be

\* Within the past ten years at least three important biographies have been printed: George Adam Smith's *Life of Henry Drummond*, Sabatier's *Life of St. Francis of Assisi*, and Alden's *Life of Phillips Brooks*. The satisfaction with which they have been received is current testimony to the value of this kind of history.

made of the history-element in the Scripture to fix and promote interest in the Book? These are practical questions that ought to have great interest for all who are trying to make fuller use of the Word of God as the appointed means of religious education.

It must strike a thoughtful mind as very remarkable that a considerable portion of the Bible is history. Of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, seventeen are clear histories. Of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, five—the most important of all—are histories. But in addition to this, many other books that are not classed as histories contain a pronounced historical element. The Book of Job for example, while properly called a philosophical treatise with the emphasis upon personal experience, is at the same time not lacking in the biographical element.\* The Book of Daniel also contains biography; and the same is true of nearly all the Prophets. The Books of Ruth and Esther are episodes, suggesting the method of the modern historian, who enlivens his narrative by inserting incidents or well-rounded stories to represent the spirit of the times. Twenty-one of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament are epistolary in form;

\* Mr. Huxley called the Book of Job "a classic of pessimism." Professor Genung of Amherst College describes it as "An epic of the Inner Life." It is interesting to note that Carlyle speaks in his diary of reading Job at midnight in London and looking out, with the meditations born of his reading, upon the silent city. To such a temperament as that of Carlyle, it was a book of intense satisfaction. The poet Tennyson always rejoiced in the Book of Job (see the Memoir by his son, vol. ii, p. 28). The historian Froude said of Job: "It will be found at the last to tower above all the poetry of the world."

yet nearly every one of the epistles contains a more or less clear reflection of the history of the times as well as items of biographical interest. Of the Old Testament it may be said that history is the pervasive atmosphere; and in the New Testament it is hardly less so.

The types or kinds of history represented in the Bible are equally engaging to the mind. None of the familiar qualities or types of history are lacking. The general movement of forces onward to a goal, which is the profoundest impression of historical study, is irresistibly the impression of the Bible. The first requisite of history is motion; in the Bible there is stir and action everywhere. In a later chapter we shall study this characteristic more at length.\* The movement at times is like that of a swiftly moving flood. The progress from Abraham and the Covenant to Moses and the delivery of the Law is as impetuous as the rush of waters. So also the swift development between the Ascension and the missionary journeys of Paul. The writings of the Prophets, on the contrary, and the letters of the Apostle Paul often suggest arrested development, periods of stagnation. In such periods the movement is imperceptible, like that of a glacier. Yet from age to age the movement is seen to continue. In this aspect the Bible is fully satisfying to the universal historical spirit already described. More than any other book it is capable of creating the confidence that comes from contact with fact and reality. Whatever questions may be raised as to detail, there is an unmistakable unfolding of thought

\* See Chapter VII, "The Literature of Courage."

and purpose. The several eras or stages of the history are like the opening of new doors of a great house. The sense of perspective is constantly in use. Forces are seen at work, and results follow. The mind finds resting places and points of contact. The enthusiasm of action possesses the mind, while the absence of historical movement might deaden the sensibilities. That the Revelation should be so largely couched in terms of history is at once a testimony to divine wisdom. It becomes thereby alive with force and action, and makes an immediate appeal to our natural desire for movement. The Epistles of the New Testament, as we shall show in another place,\* are far more effective for having the force of personal history behind them, than if they had been mere abstract essays or treatises on religious topics.

It should be noted also that the effect of history in the Bible is not monotonous. No book is marked by greater variety of historical material. History repeats itself here as well as elsewhere, yet there is a striking lack of sameness in personality and incident. If the mind rejoices in contrast, it will find ample satisfaction. Contrast, for example, the incidents of the Book of Judges with those of patriarchal times. Sudden turns and surprises are not wanting. The unexpectedness of human events is a common phenomenon. The strange union of remote causes with present effects often startles the mind. An event occurs in the far-away times of the Old Testament, and its shadow falls upon some New Testament page. This is the startling effect of the

\* See Chapter VIII, "The Charm of Letters."

promises and prophecies of the Old Testament. Yonder in the Old Testament is the utterance of the prophet about Bethlehem Ephratah, "little among the thousands of Judah";\* here in the New Testament is the picture of Joseph and Mary on the way to the City of David "to be taxed." The interesting feature of dramatic literature called *dénouement* frequently appears in biblical history. Saul of Tarsus, for instance, starts a persecution that drives the Christians away from Jerusalem. Some of them go to Antioch, and begin the work of the gospel in that heathen city. A few pages further on in the thrilling story of the Book of Acts this same Saul of Tarsus becomes a Christian, and is summoned to Antioch to assist in the propagation of the gospel. And we read in the same connection a sentence that has all the dramatic suddenness of history in it—"And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch"! The narrative is so simple, so lacking in the effort for effect, that some may even miss the silent fascination of it because of the absence of art. It is an easy task, however, to awaken the average mind to the charm of history found in the Bible.

How, then, are we to profit by the ample provision in the Bible for the zest which men in general feel for history? What use can be made of the history-element in Scripture to fix and promote interest in the Bible? The facts just reviewed ought to make it evident that the Bible is structurally a natural textbook of the mind. Its basis and atmosphere of history contain the elements that are calculated to prove attractive and promotive of interest. The so-

\* Micah v : 2. Luke ii : 5 ("to enrol himself" R. V.).

called "new education" has in the Bible abundant material at hand. The realization of fact, the enlivenment of incident, the contact with reality, the spur of personality—none of these is absent. The fundamental principle of Froebel's system of education, which is interest, has ample play and opportunity.

The foundations of interest in the Scripture are most easily laid in acquaintance with its history. This must have been the method of training the Hebrew child of the time of Christ, as is evidenced by the mastery of Old Testament fact and incident upon the part of the New Testament writers. Our methods should fully appreciate this fact. What is needed is interest born of a sense of reality. The most fruitful teaching is that which has behind it the insistence of history. An intellectual imperative accompanies such a grasp of the Word that will seldom let the mind escape. To put the mind under the spell of reality, to communicate the thrill of action, to enlist the feelings in the unfolding processes of Providence—these are at once the possibilities of biblical history, and the beginning of a life-long interest in the Book of God. One of the most strategic things in religious education is to bring the child into fascinating contact with the events of Scripture, to invest them with living interest, to charge them with suggestion and power, to set them by virtue of a creative imagination permanently in the mind. This is the method of installing the mind with the fascination of ordinary literature; it should be so with the Bible. Reserving the fuller illustration of these thoughts to subsequent pages, we offer

here a few practical suggestions, applicable both to the child and to the adult.

1. The first rule in teaching biblical history is *not merely information, but interest*. Enliven it, give it zest. Deliver it from dry routine, from mechanical stiffness.

2. Surprise the mind by the suddenness of events, by quick turns, by unexpected vistas, by the play of forces, by the interlacing of events and persons. The confusion of history is often relieved by some quick glimpse of principle. The Book of Judges, for example, takes us into the valley of death—still there are flitting lights on the hilltops.

3. Familiarity with dates, localities, divisions, stages, eras, is a help to the mind. The average mind loves precision. A map in the pulpit is a helpful innovation for occasions. Blessed is the teacher or minister who can make dates and places eloquent with human interest.\*

4. Unfamiliar history has rare attraction to the mind. Many radiating lines of historical interest run out from the Bible as a centre. The study of "historical connection" is often deeply interesting. The author has found more than one audience interested in an effort to present in public a study of "the Four Centuries of Silence," or the obscure period between Malachi and Matthew, constituting the final

\* George Adam Smith's valuable and fascinating volume, *Geography of the Holy Land*, is an example of what can be done to give the Bible a background of local interest and color. Incidentally this is commonly done in the pulpit; it has, however, never been made, except in rare instances, a real part of the pulpit art.

preparation for the coming of Christ. Such topics as Alexander the Great and the Greek Kingdom, The Maccabees, Herod the Great and the Roman Kingdom, with other related subjects, proved to have the merit of novelty and surprise, that tended to engage the mind with interest. Our plea is not so much for historical sermons as for the frequent use of the historical background. Throw the scenes of the Bible on a background of history.

5. The greatest hope for the creation of interest by means of history lies in story and biography. The fitness of the Bible for such work is very remarkable. Courses in Bible stories should be carefully organized for children, running throughout the Bible. In this respect it is the forerunner of all modern kindergarten text-books. If it were possible to select teachers with regard to their ability to tell the Bible stories with relish, there would be a great quickening of interest. Dull teaching is almost reprehensible. The same is true of dull preaching. Theological schools would do well to establish a department of pedagogy for students, in which, among other things, skill in the use of Bible story and incident should be taught. The same remarks apply to biography. The sixteenth chapter of Romans and the eleventh chapter of Hebrews are instances of the skilful use of biography. What a "cloud of witnesses"! What a galaxy of names and faces in the Bible! A minister could fascinate an audience at any Sabbath service by simply throwing on the canvas of the pulpit pictures of the men and women who move in and out of the pages of Scripture, for example: The Friends of Paul, The Women

of the Book of Acts, The Obscure People, The Boys and Girls of the Bible, The Men of Courage, etc.

6. The effect of the historical handling of the Scripture is nearly always the solidifying of interest. It is in fact building by intelligence, by reality. Our teaching of the Bible is very often taken away from the points of contact, it is made intangible and unreal, it suffers from too great distance, too remote perspective. The ultimate aim of historical teaching is to destroy the sense of distance, to bring the Book near. Interest comes with this, and is likely to abide.

7. In short teach the Bible so that "the running sound of history" may be heard in the soul. Its impression of connection, continuity, and progress is one element of its power. Some great undercurrent is moving constantly forward. There is nothing of haphazard here. The parts of this Book are bound together in a connected whole. History in the Bible is its pulse-beat of life and energy. The teacher or preacher who can communicate this zest of history, who can create in the heart its "running sound," has already won a friend for the Book who will never cease to feel its charm and power.

## VI

### THE GRASP OF THE BOOKS\*

ONE of the greatest misfortunes that ever befell the English Bible was its division into chapters and verses. Robert Stephens, who is said to have performed this doubtful service for the New Testament in the sixteenth century, during a horseback ride from Paris to Lyons, did indeed contribute much to the convenience of Bible reading. His work resulted also in making Scripture easily quotable. It must be remembered to his credit that no intelligent person is without his rubric of Bible verses and short expressions, such as "The Lord is my Shepherd," "The Wages of Sin is Death," "Come unto Me all ye that labor," "The greatest of these is Charity," "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver," which constitute for him a sort of philosophy and guide of life. It is a gain that is not to be despised that the verses of Scripture have been made to lodge so easily in the mind, to stick like thistles to the mem-

\* The title of this chapter is suggested by the title of a little volume by the Rev. Charles A. Fox of Eaton Chapel, London, *The Spiritual Grasp of the Epistles*. It is an excellent example of the method of teaching the Bible by books. The prototype, however, of all such volumes, dealing in a popular way with the books of the Bible *en bloc*, was Farrar's *Messages of the Books*. The chapters of this valuable book were originally given as sermons in St. Margaret's, Westminster.

ory, and to enter with such facility into every-day utterance.

On the other hand, there is a very heavy indictment to be brought against the method of chapter and verse division. The least of the counts in the indictment is the fact that the divisions are often so imperfectly made as to break the connection. A more serious effect is the impression created by the long habit of contemplating the Bible as fragmentary in its structure. It is an incalculable mental loss—a loss in judgment as well as in impression—to have formed the habit of thinking of the Scripture mainly in detached or isolated portions. We do not deny the value of these detached portions, nor the protection afforded by knowing them; but we insist that it is scant justice to the Word of God to think that it is best known in this way. It is to present to the mind the thin edge of Scripture, and to lose the effect of mass. It is like starting an army to march by ones and twos and threes, instead of by companies, regiments, and brigades.\*

Our reading habits have so largely followed the

\* “The misuse of isolated texts has ever been the curse of Christian truth, the glory of narrow intellects, and the cause of the worst errors of the worst days of the corrupted church. Tyranny has engraved texts upon her sword; oppression has carved texts upon her fetters; cruelty has tied texts around her faggots; ignorance has set knowledge at defiance with texts woven upon her flag; intemperance has been defended out of Timothy, and slavery has made a stronghold out of Philemon. Satan, as we know, can quote texts for his purpose. They were quoted by the Pharisees, not once or twice only, against our Lord himself; and when St. Paul fought the great battle of Christian freedom, he was anathematized with a whole Pentateuch of opposing texts.”—*Canon Farrar*.

verse and chapter divisions as to bring upon us un-awares many ill effects. In missing the quantitative force of Scripture something of its qualitative value has also been missed. We have been acquainting ourselves with the Bible by segments, instead of as a whole. We have lost thereby to a very considerable extent, the sense of continuity, as well as the impression of order, method, solidity, and weight. The relationship of part with part is often obscured, while the impression of the *wholeness* of Scripture is also lessened. Moreover this manner of knowing the Bible has failed to create a background for the mind, since it has taken little pains to look into questions of origin, occasion, and authorship. To the extent that it has neglected the whole matter of local color and atmosphere, it has suffered a distinct loss in reality. There are many Bible readers, for example, who have a fair degree of knowledge—quoting knowledge—of the letters of Paul, who have nevertheless but faintly realized that Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, are letters of the apostle, each to a separate company of Christian believers, each with a separate and distinct gospel message; each with a special need or set of needs in view, and each with a local color or situation of its own. It is no railing accusation to say that there are not a few who are even better versed in Scripture knowledge than the ordinary person, who would find it difficult to answer such questions as these: “What is the message of the Epistle to the Colossians?” “Why were the first and second Epistles to the Thessalonians written, and what are their principal contents?” “What were the interesting circumstances connected with

the writing of the letter to the Philippians?" "What is the fascinating story that underlies the little letter to Philemon?" etc. The trouble is that the reading method that we have brought to the Bible has produced well-versed readers, but, except in relatively few instances, it has done little more.

The prevailing method of Bible teaching, it is needless to add, has conformed very largely to the verse and chapter divisions. Ninety-nine out of a hundred sermons are preached from separate texts. There is, of course, frequent explanation of the context, but these explanations are commonly limited to the immediate scope of the text. The methods that prevail in teaching the Bible to the young are alike fragmentary. Few indeed of the youth of the church grow up with well-rounded and connected ideas of the books of the Bible. In the public schools on the contrary, the pupils of the Grammar grades and High School have probably made such an acquaintance with "The Courtship of Miles Standish," "Hiawatha," "The Idyls of the King," or even "Paradise Lost," as will last them for a lifetime.

It is impossible to resist the conclusion that these imperfect methods are in part responsible for the sluggish interest of many in the Bible. Experienced educators understand that they cannot expect to produce in the mind any original feelings of interest or fascination unless they can underlay these feelings with a sense of mastery. The mind will fly off from that which it does not know thoroughly. The real fascination of the Book has not yet come upon one who only knows it by the easy facility and evi-

dent beauty of its verses. Such a grasp of the Scripture is much too light; it will not endure the invasion of other interests; it is too shallow, and is fed from sources that are too near the surface. Knowledge of this kind, which depends largely on outward impression, fails to instil in the mind a serious respect. It fails likewise to satisfy the mind that the Bible is possessed of those commanding qualities which it has everywhere met in the literature of power.

There are hundreds of Bible readers, many of them persons of real intelligence, who have but slight suspicion of the cumulative effect of the Scripture; and this because they have never tried to grasp it as they would other books. It may be accepted as a rule that any person of intelligence who approaches the Bible with the intention of knowing it somewhat as he would know other books, by enlisting all the mind's faculties of appreciation and mastery, will begin to understand something of its fascination.\*

It must be apparent to one who will candidly consider the methods of approach in vogue among Bible

\* The author has in mind the case of an intelligent woman, a genuine student of literary forms and forces, who had no interest in the Bible—no interest, that is, beyond the ordinary sentiment. A turn of affairs brought her into studious contact with the Scripture. She brought to her study the tastes and feelings that had been developed in the study of general literature. She found delight in mastering the books. Her enthusiasm for the Minor Prophets, for example, was contagious. She confessed that she had never before suspected "how much the Bible contains." Nor was this mere literary interest in the Bible; it was such interest as is likely to come to any person of average intelligence who will set out to know the Book in a rational way.

readers, and indeed among many Bible teachers, that we have been “snipping the Bible into atomistic fragments and reducing it to a heterogeneous chaos of isolated phrases.” Separate verses and passages often have, to be sure, a marvellous power of flaming the heart; but the mastery of texts is not necessarily the mastery of the Book.

A really masterful knowledge of the Bible implies the grasp of its separate books. The term is in itself suggestive of several things.

*First.* The first suggestion is that the books of the Bible are worthy of real intellectual effort. By this we mean the kind of effort that we are accustomed to put forth in connection with the best literature. There are books that may be read casually, with a sort of mental relaxation. There are moods of the mind indeed in which we wish to read the Bible in this way, simply for the sake of its quiet comfort and joy. It must be evident, however, that the Bible deserves much more at our hands. It deserves to be read with awakened faculties, with the purpose of understanding and mastery. In fact it may be said that the books of the Bible, almost without exception, make this imperious demand upon our mental powers. They possess, many of them, the very elements of construction, style, and thought, which, in the best literature, put us constantly upon our mettle. Whoever thinks to read the Book lightly, without putting forth his worthiest effort, does but scant justice to the real character of the Book which God has prepared for the spiritual education of the race. The Book of Job may serve as a fair example of what we mean. Nothing less than a real

grasp of this wonderful book can do justice to its superior value. There are few writings of men that put a severer tax upon the mental powers. Yet an ordinary mind can hope to grasp its meaning, and when the Book of Job is once really mastered, it becomes an elemental and integral factor in the soul's spiritual education.

*Second.* The second suggestion is that the books of the Bible contain each a separate message which deserves to be clearly apprehended. Even casual readers have a general impression of this fact, and turn naturally, for example, to the Psalms for manifold expressions of the spirit of devotion, to the Acts of the Apostles for the story of the early church, to the Book of Revelation for the unfolding panorama of the future. This impression of the distinctive character of each of the books grows with study; it becomes, in fact, an *open sesame* to the understanding of the Bible as a whole. One who pursues this plan will soon find each of the books falling into an assigned place, occupying a particular niche in the temple of Revelation. His sense of the order of Scripture will become intensified. It will be no longer to him a jumble of swiftly passing scenes. Each book will represent to him a state of spiritual knowledge or instruction, a particular angle of vision or experience. In short, the kaleidoscopic character of the Book will appear; its light, in other words, will shine out through many facets as in the case of a well-cut diamond. He will think of Genesis, for example, as the book of historical foundations, where not only the dawn of history appears, but also the dawn of the divine purpose for man.

Exodus will stand out distinctly as the story of a tragic peril and a purposeful deliverance in the life of God's people. Leviticus, with all its multiplicity of detail, will stand logically in order as containing the Institutes of Religion, the first complete definition of worship and of the early tutelage designed by God for his people. The grasp of each of these early books means everything to the Bible student. As a reader does a palpable injustice to an author to omit his preface or introduction, so is it a great injustice to the Scripture to deal lightly with its first books. Every thoughtful reader knows that a thorough acquaintance with the Book of Leviticus, for instance, casts light all along the pathway of the Word, even to the end of Revelation.

The necessity for this grasp of the Books is even more evident in the New Testament. The letters of Paul, while identical in containing an exhibition of gospel truth, have each of them a distinctive message or phase of the General Message of the Gospel. The Epistles to the Thessalonians are unlike all the other Epistles in laying emphasis upon the second coming of Christ. First and Second Corinthians are devoted mainly to Church Life, purity, marriage, divisions, administration, organization, method, problems, discipline, ministry. Romans is the argumentative presentation, with the use of history, logic, and experience, of the solid basis of the gospel in the spiritual principle of divine justification of the sinner by faith. Galatians in like manner presents the argument of the gospel, but in briefer form, and for the purpose of appealing to a company of Christian believers, whose faith was waning or becoming im-

pregnated with an insidious and poisonous element of law-salvation, in distinction from faith-salvation. Galatians is an appeal to them to come back to Christ and trust in him alone. Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians leave argument and logic behind, representing as they do the religion of a mature mind, and are content for the most part to affirm what the heart knows by experience of the love and fellowship of Jesus Christ. Yet each of the three is unlike the others. Ephesians unfolds the spiritual delights of that high elevation which has come to the believer, whereby he is made to be one with his Lord, is made to "sit together in Heavenly places" with him. Philippians sounds the note of Christian joy and rejoicing, which should follow the believer in and out of his various experiences. And Colossians, though corresponding with Ephesians in much of its language, differs from the other in that it contains a fervent, ecstatic description of the Supremacy of Jesus Christ over the Universe of Creation and over the Universe of Faith, a description that constitutes without argument a complete answer to those in the Colossian Church and elsewhere who incline to substitute any form of speculation or faith that belittles the character and authority of Christ. To know any one of these letters of Paul thoroughly is to profit both intellectually and spiritually. To know Galatians and Colossians alone—to grasp their meaning—is to possess a liberal education in the gospel.

It is no less apparent that the four Gospels grow in the intensity of their impression when the separate view of each is clearly understood. The pur-

pose of each of the four is to present Jesus Christ as the divine Saviour of the World; but each of the four presents him as such in a distinctive light. Matthew's picture is a *Profile*, wherein Jesus is presented in clear-cut outline against the background of Old-Testament history, prophecy, promise, and type as the Promised Messiah. Mark's picture is like a *Steel Engraving*, wherein the very straightforwardness and directness of the inspired artist, and his boldness of delineation, leave an irresistible impression of the Powerful One who is able to save. Luke's picture is a *Half-Tone Picture*, wherein the strong light of Divinity is sifted and in a sense moderated as it passes through the fine lines of Humanity, showing Jesus as the Son of Man, the Friend of Sinners, the Elder Brother who can restore us to the love of the Father. John's picture is the *Life-Size Portrait*, wherein the latest of the four artists, the one who was closest to Jesus, paints a picture of Jesus as the loving heart of faith is bound to see him, his divinity and his humanity rounded out into the completeness which experience gives, in whom is unfolded the whole secret of life and salvation—in other words Jesus as the *ne plus ultra* of the heart's desire and need (John xx:31). How necessary it is to be familiar with each of these pictures of Christ in order that the composite picture of Christ in the heart may contain something of the fulness of his Person.\*

*Third.* The third suggestion is that such grasp of the books is productive of very important results. The first of these is the growing sense of mastery in the

\* See Chapter XI, "Four Pictures of Jesus."

mind of the reader. It is possible in this way to go through the Bible as a housekeeper might go through a house with her bunch of keys, unlocking door after door and opening the house from beginning to end. This is the true meaning of an *open Bible*. Such a plan possesses incalculable advantage. If nothing more it is the feeling of ownership, the joyous sense like that of Kepler, the astronomer, of "thinking God's thoughts after him." With this feeling of mastery comes also a kind of familiarity and facility with the Scripture which is one secret of its fascination. By this we do not mean the familiarity which may breed contempt and indifference, nor the facility which produces dogmatic confidence. We mean rather that sense of being *at home* in the Bible, which is like the feeling of one who has watched the building of his house, and knows by experience its structural completeness. One never knows how well built the House Beautiful is that contains the Revelation of God until he has examined its structural parts. Another result will be found among the impressions of this manner of dealing with Scripture, and this is the feeling of its solidity. We have already suggested that to know the Bible by verses and passages merely is to have the thin edge of Scripture presented to the mind. Its massive force and effectiveness are manifest when the mind tries to grasp the meaning of its several books. The traveller finds great delight in viewing the forest of statues that adorn the Cathedral of Milan; yet there is a structural grandeur and solidity about the great Cathedral which is the background of every statue, and which constitutes its real meaning to the

thoughtful beholder. For the practical needs of instruction the grasp of the books brings incalculable benefits. Not the least of these is the imperious demand for study. Dilettante methods of handling the Book are wholly inadequate for these things. To know the books of the Bible and the place which they severally occupy in the great plan of Revelation requires the utmost diligence in study. It discourages likewise those superficial ways of dealing with the Scripture which may entertain for the time, but which leave no real deposit of interest in the mind. Still another benefit is found in the interest of variety which is thus introduced into Bible study. The bane of Bible teaching is sameness. The preacher who will now and then take up an entire book of the Bible and tell its story, with the fullest intelligence and skill at his command, will not only produce a pleasing variety in his pulpit method—he will at the same time invest the Bible with new interest. Moreover, the compulsion of thought comes with this way of handling the Scripture. We insist that our ordinary methods of teaching the Bible too frequently fail to create in the mind an impression of the Bible's majestic power. In reality, no other book can equal it as a quickener of thought. Only give it an opportunity to speak for itself; let it have full sway with the mind; and it will almost invariably acquire "a new splendor and significance." This method contemplates, as the reader will observe, a real education of the people in the Scripture. This is one of the pressing needs of the church to-day. Experience proves also that it is productive of interest. It is found that even the

Minor Prophets—*terra incognita* to most Bible readers—are replete with interest and fascination when they are studied as separate messages; and their very leaves, as Goethe said of Shakespeare, seem to rustle and to be driven to and fro by the great winds of destiny.

It remains to offer a few very simple suggestions as to how to grasp the meaning of a book of the Bible, especially for the purpose of instruction.

1. There are, of course, many and learned *Introductions* for every book and it will not do to neglect the material accumulated by scholarship. Apart from such help, however, the simplest and most efficient plan is to read and re-read the book until it possesses the mind, until the impression of the whole is perfectly clear. No amount of comments and explanations will fit one to present a book of the Bible to others; the teacher must know it himself familiarly, must enter its atmosphere, must obtain in other words its very feeling. Details will come with further study; the first thing desired is the impressionistic effect. Those who have not tried the plan of giving many successive readings to a book of Scripture can hardly understand how, by such a simple plan, a book will gradually stand out in the mind in an ever clearer light.

2. The next step is to obtain, if possible, a mental picture of the author. The interest in personality is unabating. The Bible teacher may depend upon producing an initial interest in any of the books by presenting the man with his message. Very often the autobiographic element is the most convenient handle to lay hold of. It was a naïve remark of Voltaire

that "all kinds of literature are good except the kinds that bore, and the kind that bores the least usually is autobiography." Suppose, for example, that one is studying the Book of Amos for the purpose of telling its story effectively to an audience, and of investing it with permanent interest for the mind. The book furnishes merely the outline of the author's personality, but there is enough to make one feel that Amos the Prophet is worthy to be classed with men of heroic mould, such as Elijah, John the Baptist, Wickliffe, Savonarola, Luther, and Knox. He was a native of Tekoa. Draw a picture of the shepherd life roundabout Tekoa.\* Amos was "among the herdsmen of Tekoa." The Lord took him from following the flock, and from the dressing of sycamore trees—an *inspired farmer!* The atmosphere of the book is that of all-out-of-doors. The sheep, the trees, the wild animals, the stars, the locusts, the fruit decaying, furnish him his most striking images. It is the picture of a rude yet strong individual, not taught in the schools, but taught of God in righteousness and justice. The climax of the dramatic is in the scene where Amos stands before Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, fearlessly saying to him, "Hear thou the word of the Lord," a scene that reminds one of Nathan before David, of John the Baptist before Herod, of John Knox before Queen Mary, of Luther at the Diet of Worms. The book becomes tenfold more interesting for having obtained a mental picture of the rugged personality of the prophet. The same is true of many other books of Scripture. It is impossible, for example,

\* See *Amos, An Essay in Exegesis*, by H. G. Mitchell, pp. 3-4.

to enter with zest into the study of the Letters of Paul without remembering constantly what manner of man he was. His letters abound indeed in hints of personality.\*

3. The third step in the grasp of any book of the Bible is to understand the particular *situation* or *occasion* that caused it to be written. With some the occasion is of a general nature; but with others it is very definite, even local or personal in some cases. The neglect of this in Bible teaching is the neglect of an important element of interest. To show an audience, for example, that Deuteronomy is in reality nothing more than the Farewell Address of Moses to the people, his repetition and summing up of the Law before his departure, is to show at once the *raison d'être* of the book, to give it coherency and perspective, to secure for it in the mind of the reader its logical place in the Revelation. The whole advantage of local color comes with the recognition of occasion. The ordinary reader has his interest at once quickened when he appreciates the fact that the Book of Amos in reality represented the work of a Home Missionary, he having been sent from Judah to preach in Israel; that the Book of Acts was not so much the Acts of the Apostles, as it was the Acts of the Holy Spirit in the strategic and far-reaching first years of the history of the Christian Church; that the Epistle to the Philippians was written by the Apostle Paul in response to the kindly act of the Philippian Christians in sending a gift to him in his Roman imprisonment; that the Epistles to the Thes-

\* See Chapter VIII, "The Charm of Letters."

salonians grew very largely out of the speculations that arose in Thessalonica over the second coming of Christ; that the Epistles to Timothy and Titus were letters of personal advice to younger ministers in charge of churches or fields of Christian activity; and that the Epistle to Philemon was a letter of appeal sent to a Christian master upon the return of a runaway slave who had recently become a Christian. The result of this method is to give the Bible student a hold upon the books that no amount of study of separate verses and passages can produce. Such grasp of the books is bound to be accompanied by interest—the interest born of knowledge. The books now stand for something. They no longer hang in the air. The knowledge of their origin and occasion becomes a part of their effectiveness. In short, the more concrete the books are seen to be, the closer they come to human life and need.

4. With some knowledge of the author, and with as clear an understanding as possible of the occasion, the teacher must now apprehend the message of the book. The message grows out of the situation. It is the answer of the inspired writer to the condition or need that is apparent. One may study every book of the New Testament thus: given a certain set of conditions or a certain occasion, or a certain attitude or temperament of mind—what is the answer of the author out of the gospel, through the media of his own temperament and experience? The result is the message of the book. The climax of interest in the grasp of the books comes here. The wide adaptability of the gospel to human conditions is never so apparent as when the reader discovers

the varying conditions revealed in the various books of the Bible.

5. The real *crux* in the mastery of the books is, after all, the problem of skill. The public presentation of the books may be made very dull. On the other hand, it may be made to thrill with interest from beginning to end. After the main points already considered have been made to stand out, the final and the most particular part of the teacher's task is the review of the book, and the application of its teaching to present-day life. This must be rapid and condensed. It may sometimes be done by chapters. It is often better done by a rapid and orderly presentation of the phases of the main thought as it is unfolded in the notable passages of the book. In Ephesians, for example, the thought of union with Christ—"to sum up all things in Christ" (i:10)—is presented in several ascending figures. *First.* The figure of the Temple—"in whom ye also are builded together" (ii:22). *Second.* The figure of the Head and Body—"may grow up in all things into him, which is the head" (iv:15). *Third.* The figure of the Husband and Wife—"that he might present the church to himself" (v:27). The art in this kind of Bible teaching consists in knowing for one's self exactly what the meaning of the book is; and then in knowing how to attach part to part, what to emphasize and what to omit, in a rapid impressionistic review that is calculated to leave with the hearer the feeling that he has himself been spoken to in the message of the book. Any teacher or preacher who will recognize the value of this method of instruction will "covet the best gifts."

For this kind of work with the Bible appeals to the feeling of mastery both in the mind of the teacher and in the mind of the scholar. It removes all impressions of effeminacy or dilettanteism in handling the Book. It is at least thoroughgoing. The result is nearly always a growth of interest in the Scripture, and a deeper response to its manifold appeal. A pastor who will occasionally lead his congregation in studying the books of the Bible, either from the pulpit or in the prayer-meeting hour, or in a pastor's Bible class, will find that he has opened a new secret of power in the life of the Christian Church.

## VII

### THE LITERATURE OF COURAGE

“ALL the world loves a lover.” It is equally true that all the world loves a hero. A missionary in Africa relates how a village in the interior was stirred to transports of delight by the deed of a native in rescuing a drowning man. The drowsiest age and the most commonplace people are often moved to unusual displays of enthusiasm by acts of human courage. Courage indeed is one of those redemptive features in humanity’s life which are constantly producing surprises, opening sudden vistas, and easing the burdens of mankind. “There is no finer flower in this green earth than courage.” It is the ornament not alone of those who are in the press of the great throng, but of those also who are called to interpret “the terms of silence.” It is as often the “passion of patience” as the initiative of aggression; it is as often “the white flower of a blameless life” as the flash of the sword on the battlefield.

The elements that constitute courage are easily discernible. The first is the sheer love of adventure. There is a spirit of daring in man that makes a constant protest against ease, complacency, and sloth. “At heart all men and women are romantic and adventurous.” Whether it be the Search for the Golden Fleece or the quest of the North Pole—there will al-

ways be heroic spirits ready for the proposal. But courage contains something more than daring—it contains the strength of action. The man who can do something, especially if it be against odds, awakens our quick admiration. Much as we desire the coming of an era of permanent peace, we know that the martial instinct will never quite die out of the heart. Carlyle somewhere says that the King is *Cynning*, the *canning* man, the man who *can*. There is royalty in action, and the world is always ready to applaud those who show bravery amidst affairs. There is still another element that rounds out our idea of courage to completion—the element of conviction and self-sacrifice. True courage is a product, not an impulse. It is inherently a moral, a spiritual, factor of life. It represents the victory over self and the reign of disinterested judgment. It insists upon the realization of severe ideas of duty. It raises the standard of an invisible kingdom of Right and Manhood, and summons men to a doctrine of human *devoir*, that is based, in the last analysis, upon the thought of God. True courage sublimates and exalts human life, giving it a beauty that is fairly transcendent of earth and time.

Even more than Love, Courage is the constructive quality of the best literature. Love without the concomitant of Courage, creates but an empty romance. We desire to see men and women on the pages of literature breathing an atmosphere of heroism, living unselfishly, doing heartily what they have to do, flinging themselves without reserve into the breach, counting their own lives of lower value than Honor, Truth, and Sacrifice. This is the ineffable

charm of all the great books of the imagination, from the early stories of romance and adventure which long-ago men and women told one another in the dawn of history, to the modern days of commanding fiction—from the spell of Homeric deeds of valor and the sagas of the *Nibelungenlied*, to the despotic sway of Sir Walter and Thackeray, of Cooper and Stevenson. The author has not yet recovered from the surprise occasioned upon being told by a sedate man of business that from boyhood on to middle age he had read and re-read Dumas' *Three Musketeers* with unfailing delight. Yet the explanation is simple enough. "The race lives in its heroic folk, its men and women who dare and do." The Gascon adventurers riding into Paris on their raw-boned ponies, to engage in the swashbuckler events of their highly colored lives, acting always, however extravagantly, in the spirit of their motto, "Each for all and all for each," may not be in every item of their deportment the fine gentlemen whom we would most like to commend. Nevertheless there is something in them that stirs the blood. There is at least no mawkish sentimentality, no lily-fingered helplessness in the presence of the facts of life. What they do, they do heartily, flinging themselves without reserve into the breach, counting their own lives of lower value than Friendship and Honor.

On the whole the legitimate literature of courage is the most wholesome literature we possess, despite the fact that some have warped and twisted it into an implement of harm. It stimulates our flagging energy, feeds our imagination, widens our vision, and revives our hope. It gives a certain confidence

to life, invests it with reality, inspires it with heroism. Has not our own generation, reputed to be commercial and unheroic, repudiated so-called Realism in literature, with its morbid introspection, its society drivel and innuendo, its disheartening moral post-mortem? Emerson was not far wrong when he declared that the search after great men is one of the chief occupations of the mind, young or old. Those authors who are content to paint only the weaknesses of humanity, to exhibit men always in the fog, never in the sunlight, can never fully commend themselves to the faith and heroism of mankind. We prefer the fustian bravery of Scott's heroes, who at least do heartily what they are called to do, to the crippled courage of men overwhelmed by the situations and problems of Realism. The fascination of the "world's truth with a beautiful woman walking through it"—to use David Swing's definition of the novel—is a fascination which wanes when the "beautiful woman" has not also some elements of strength and fortitude to commend her to our sense of what is worthy. "Beauty rides upon a lion!"

Literature is determined by two laws, one is centripetal and the other is centrifugal. There are periods when the centrifugal tendency grows strong. Writers say to themselves—"The old traditions are outworn. New paths must be opened up. New methods, new devices, new formulae must be invented. Let us break away from the past and bring in a new era in literature." This is the *Sturm und Drang*. It is the outburst of impatient spirits who would run the

world's thinking perforce into new moulds. It is not denied that these new vistas have their use. But the trouble is that there is nothing new in life. Hence there is a centripetal law which draws literature back constantly to the formative elements of life. Whatever disturbances may come, the best product of the literary instinct is sure to be the expression of the finalities, the fundamentals, of life. With every possible variation and permutation in style and plot and incident, there are certain great human truths to which our writers must be ever harking back. Courage is one of these. It is one of the first principles in literature, because it is one of the first principles in life. There is a distinct weakness, a missing note, in literature, when this quality is lacking or heavily obscured. It is the note in literature which, being set free in its own atmosphere, gives us always, either in the form of heroic action or potent thinking, what De Quincey has called the "Literature of Power," as distinguished from the "Literature of Knowledge." The term courage applied to a literary type is as broad as possible—broader than mere chivalry, adventure, or heroism. It is that quality of largeness, freedom, light, generosity, potency—the quality which the Latins loved to express by *vir* and *virtus*. It reaches back, one might say, to the primal faith of mankind. Men are optimistic when they read. There is a universal revolt against printed pessimism. In our books we desire to meet life's fine young spirit, to feed upon the bread of optimism, to enjoy the jubilation of action. The people will never take as their hero the man who is content, amidst the clamoring needs of the day, to

sit apart and study—*himself!* *Robert Elsmere* will be dismissed by the next generation, while *Henry Esmond* and *The Spy* will sing their song of the fitness of moral courage to generations yet unborn. We look to literature to sound, not the fog-horn of distress, but the note of high-born courage. “Some root of Knighthood and of nobleness” is always left in men, out of which to grow our heroes.

It is a discriminating remark of Lessing that Homer’s dramatic art consists in the impression of action. “When Homer wishes to tell us how Agamemnon was dressed, he makes the King put on every article of raiment in our presence; the soft tunic, the great mantle, the beautiful sandals, and the sword. When he is thus fully equipped he grasps the sceptre.” It is courageous action that stamps literature with power. Donatello’s wonderful figure of St. George was first exhibited outside of a church in Florence. Every limb was perfect, every line complete, the face lighted with almost human intelligence, the brow uplifted, the form poised as if it would step into life. Among those who studied the statue long and earnestly was Michelangelo. The bystanders waited for his verdict. When it came, it was brief but expressive. Still looking at the superb statue, he lifted his hand slowly and said, “Now, March!” Action is conclusive.

Turning now to the Bible, we are not surprised to find that it is not lacking in the literature of courage. The Bible contains, let it be observed, the formative ideas of life—Love, Reverence, Faith, Courage, Mystery, Salvation. It is “founded squarely on the great facts of life.” To have omit-

ted courage would have been to omit an element about which life organizes itself for aggressive service. Religion that exists apart from courage can make no real contribution to human life.

It may be remarked generally that it is the action of the Bible that is one very evident source of its fascination. There is no literary stagnation in the Book. It contains, not so much a philosophical exposition of what life is, as an exhibition, by actual scenes incidents, and biographies, of the meaning of life. Imagine the negative effect upon religious thought if the Bible had taken less pains to depict the action of men—if, for example, it had brought us for the most part disquisitions on worship, instead of showing us men engaged in worship; Abraham building his altars, Moses at the burning-bush, Gideon at the threshing-floor; or, if, again, it had merely uttered brave exhortations to men to stand up for God, and had omitted to give us pictures of actual battle-fields and of men contending in real conflict for the faith of God. If the Bible as we have it is so full of “moving accidents by flood and field,” if it does not hesitate to paint battlefields where men contend and die, if it even presents the spectacle now and again of great catastrophes, like the drowning of Pharaoh’s host, whatever our critical judgment may say, we must at least confess that there is a mighty irresistible energy here, a strength of action, that is calculated to possess the soul. We shall notice in another chapter \* how childhood is impressed by this element of Scripture; and the adult mind never quite escapes its influence. The Bible is opposed

\* See Chapter XIII, “The Scripture and Childhood.”

to every form of self-complacency as well as to that masterly inactivity that weakens the nerve of endeavor. The Bible is all movement, stir, and action. Many objections have been made to the battles and bloodshed of the Old Testament. But if these be viewed as an expression, after the mode and standard of the age, of the daring of faith, the objections are at least relieved. There were extravagances then as now, and it is not to be supposed that every such incident met with divine approval. All objections to the contrary, the impression produced upon the mind by the Old Testament incidents is that faith in those days was not the mild product of later ages of moderatism: it was on fire with purpose; it knew little indeed of the restraints that are so familiar to the modern mind; it was at times even cruel and unmoral. There are incidents and scenes of the Old Testament which the modern mind would gladly dismiss; yet even these, it may be, have contributed something to the impression of action, and of struggle, which is an unfailing source of stimulus to the mind.

Whatever criticisms may be passed upon the Old Testament from the standpoint of modern feeling, it is not observed that the influence of the Old Testament is on the wane. It still sways the imagination of men, furnishing inexhaustible material and illustration for the life of courage. Like Milton in *Paradise Lost* and Bunyan in *The Holy War*, many modern writers find the Old Testament indispensable in presenting to the mind such images of a strong life as are calculated to influence decision. No book of the Bible has been so often assailed on the score

of its removal from modern sympathy and judgment as the Book of Judges. Some indeed have seriously questioned its right to a place in the Word of God. But what is the purpose of this Book of Judges? Is it not to show the fearful conditions that are certain to follow in an age of spiritual anarchy, when every man is a law unto himself, and the multitude know not the Lord? But this is not all. Is not its purpose also to paint against the black background of an abandoned age the faces of certain men and women, who are of the "immortal protagonists in the drama of life"? If faith and courage sometimes shine with surprising beauty in filthy gutters and dark alleys, so does the Book of Judges fascinate the mind with its unexpected survivals of courage and light in an age of general decay.

Summing up our impressions of the literature of courage as exhibited in the Bible, we may note several distinctive values and sources of interest.

1. There is immense advantage in the *spirit of action* which is everywhere prevalent throughout the Scripture. Its atmosphere, so far from being merely academic, is redolent of the arena and the mart. Actual men and women are here, contending, working, worshipping, loving, sinning, dying. Their names and characters come before us; we enter sympathetically into the situations that confront them; we study life from the view-point of their lives; we interpret spiritual truth in the light of their personal history. The Bible is the most *restless* of all books. There is some great ferment at work; men are dominated by some inexhaustible impulse. The spectacular movements of the Old Testament, the

call and migration of Abram, the removal of Jacob's household to Egypt, the Exodus and the Conquest of the Promised Land, are something more than great national changes, they are tokens of a great spirit of aggression which is the very spirit of the whole Book.

The same spirit of active aggression permeates the New Testament. The Acts of the Apostles is rightly named, however it does not tell the story of all the apostles. The New Testament craft has caught a mighty wind in its moving sails, and is moving irresistibly on. The Ascension is no sooner over than the disciples return to the upper room in Jerusalem to face their work, and to fill the vacancy in the apostolic number (chapter i). In the second chapter they are seen amidst the moving scenes of Pentecost; in the third chapter they are undertaking their first apostolic labor in the cure of the lame man at the Gate Beautiful; in the fourth chapter they are meeting persecution and experiencing deliverance; in the fifth chapter they are dealing out heroic treatment to the guilty pair who thought to make their way in the kingdom by lying; in the sixth chapter they are meeting the needs of the growing church by instituting the office of deacon; in the seventh chapter they are proving the courage of the Christian faith in the first martyrdom; in the eighth chapter they are taking advantage of persecution to preach the Word more widely; in the ninth chapter they are winning to the banner of the Cross one whose spirit of aggression shall be world-wide; in the tenth chapter they are entering a strangely opened door in the household of Cornelius; in the

eleventh chapter they are reaching out to Antioch in the North and witnessing a wonderful work of grace; in the twelfth chapter they are suffering severe persecution again, but rejoicing in the growth of the Word; and in the thirteenth chapter they are sending Barnabas and Saul out into the world as representatives of a gospel that could only content itself with the most rapid and eager aggression. The ship that sailed from Seleucia (Acts xiii:4) in the year 45 A. D. with three men standing on its deck, Barnabas, Saul, and Mark—men with fire in their hearts and light in their eyes—is a symbol of the mighty, restless activity that characterizes the Book.

The Book of Acts follows after the Gospels in order that the New Testament church for all time may read the story of action in the early church, and imbibe its spirit of aggression. To this day it is true that any believer of sensitive heart, who reads the Acts of the Apostles, must catch its thrill of heroic action, must feel his pulses beat its rhythm of eager movement, must have communicated to him its mighty agitation of interest and enthusiasm, and an irresistible desire to put his hand to the gospel task. It is impossible in this view to overestimate the value to the church of the Book of Acts. So long as the church lingers in the atmosphere of this book, it will not be lacking in courage and aggression; it will always be a missionary church; it will always go forward with the Cross.

2. The Bible furnishes to its readers “companionship with the heroes of the race.” It is at one with the best secular literature in meeting this need of

men. There is incalculable benefit especially for young minds in the companionship of those who have proved themselves able to do and dare, have opposed courage to difficulty, and faith to defeat. The heroic element, however much it has been exaggerated, is after all the most helpful element in literature. It is this that scatters the miasm of the mind by infusing the ozone of hope; it is this that produces mental and moral sanity, crystallizes the floating elements of life about certain fixed centres, such as purpose, self-restraint, self-sacrifice, and courage, and keeps the youth of the world alive by the incarnation of those ideals of life that are ever vitalizing and constructive. To what extent the presence of heroism in the Bible has operated in deepening its hold upon the natural feelings of the heart is apparent upon reflection. With such force and initiative has the lesson of heroism been taught in the Old Testament that certain names, such as Joseph, Daniel, Caleb, have become the universal symbols of human courage. If the labors of Hercules have furnished time out of mind a literary symbol of conquest over difficulty, they have not displaced the toils of Samson, the struggles of David, the victories of Nehemiah. Joseph has become a sort of norm or rubric of courage for young manhood, and thousands have been inspired to live a stronger life by the spectacle of his manly victory. Remembering Caleb, that one of the twelve spies who said, "We are able, let us go up and possess it," has helped many to overcome difficulty, and snatch victory out of the teeth of defeat.

3. The Bible is true to life also in making heroism

a redemptive feature. Other faults can be condoned if men are but ready for their task, and show no tendency to shrink in the presence of danger. Such is the case with "the sons of Zeruiah," who are mentioned by this title more than a score of times.\* It is true that David twice expostulates against them; it is true that they have some hard and cruel deeds against them in the record. Yet there is something in these sons of a strong mother that stirs the blood. Not "cast in gentle mould," they were men of quick and steady action, men who took no counsel of their fears, men who were ready to meet every exigency with prompt initiative. Witness Asahel's pursuit of Abner. Reckless to be sure as he pressed on in the race, "as light of foot as a wild roe." But determined also and manfully persistent; he "turned not to the right nor the left." David is asking for volunteers on one occasion. "Who will go down with me?" Quick as a flash comes the response from Abishai, one of the sons of Zeruiah, "I will go down with thee." It was another son of Zeruiah, Joab, who climbed the wall of Jerusalem with the Jebusites flinging jeers and stones at him from the top. Despite their faults these sons of Zeruiah have some valuable lessons to teach us, about strong and hearty action, about throwing one's self into the breach, about never hesitating when duty calls. "Let us be of good courage and play the man!"—the man who issued this clarion call to Israel against Ammon could not have been wholly bad. At any rate his heroic note has sounded down through the years and has inspired men for many a battlefield. The won-

\* See I and II Samuel, I Kings, and I Chronicles.

derful way in which the inspiring sentences of the Bible ring in the heart and fire the soul with courage is well illustrated by an incident recorded in Henry M. Stanley's African travels. It was in an hour of loneliness and distress. "A silence as of death was around about me. In this physical and mental distress alone, I besought God to give me back my companions, whose fate was a mystery. Before turning in for the night, I resumed my reading the Bible as usual. I had already read the book through from beginning to end, and was now in Deuteronomy for the second reading. I came to the verses wherein Moses exhorts Joshua in those fine lines, 'Be strong and of good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them, for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee nor forsake thee.' It encouraged me to go on and be confident." Referring to this penetrative and inspiring quality of the Scripture, Professor John E. McFadyen says: "The music of its words haunts the ear, and dwells like an inspiration in the heart. They stir the blood, they brace the moral nature, and they send us forth with hope and cheer to play our part like men." What the characters of the Bible have done to add to the worth and strength of life is beyond calculation. To be in their company is to be with those who have made spiritual history for the race.

4. But it is even more important to notice that the courage which is commended to us by the example of biblical incidents and persons is of a moral type. It is not mere bravado, nor is it mere daring; it is rather the heroism that issues from ideas, hopes, and convictions of the soul. The picturesque act of

David's soldiers in breaking through the lines of the enemy to fetch water from the well by the gate in Bethlehem, in response to the rash wish of the King, which seems at first thought to be little more than a hasty deed of reckless men, grows in sublimity, when we reflect that it is to be received on its higher side as a tribute to the theocratic character of the King. Very many of the incidents of Scripture are lifted in this manner to the level of sublimity. David's wild courage as a freebooter has behind it the never-fading picture of Samuel and his horn of oil. Daniel defies the command of the King and prays three times a day to his God; but always with his "window open in his chamber towards Jerusalem." Nehemiah's boldness in speaking to the King is explained by the fact that he "prayed to the God of Heaven." Gideon's mighty courage against the Midianites dates back to the threshing floor by the wine-press, to the offering consumed on the rock, and to the wet and dry fleece. Joseph's story is not rightly understood except in the light of heroic faith, while Job's suffering obtains its rightful interpretation in the light of a trustful spirit. The most pathetic instance of courage in the Old Testament, Rizpah watching by the bodies of her slain sons, her sackcloth spread upon the bare rock, "from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of Heaven," is fairly symbolic of the hardships that must accompany the yearning instinct of motherhood in its watching over the destinies of the world. No other courage is so intensely moral as that of motherhood.\*

\* II Samuel, 21st chapter.

But why should we undertake to manufacture a list of the heroes of faith when such a list is already at hand? The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, reciting in the eleventh chapter the famous deeds of the men of old, beginning with Abel, including the pilgrimages of Abram and the stupendous movements of Israel under Moses, and concluding with a summary of a multitude of heroic deeds, is not content to regard these as instances of unattached natural courage, but hallows them in every case by the influences of faith. Nor does he forget to press the inspirational quality of this historical recital. These, he says, are like a great cloud of witnesses looking down upon us from the heights which they have won. Therefore in the presence of these on-lookers, inspired by what they have been, let us run our race with like courage and strength.

King David said a larger thing than he knew when he wrote, "Blessed be the Lord my Strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight" (Psalm cxliv:1). The literal warfare of the Old Testament is not so much the thing that constitutes the Bible a literature of courage, as the warfare for a faith out of which heroism is born. The "moral conflict" is the chief interest of history and its greatest source of inspiration. The strongest pulsation in the Book of God is the beating of the great unfailing hope through all the ages. Are there periods of darkness and dismay, are there times of lapse and neglect? Still the old hope beats on. Are there days of weary exile? Still the people of God are "prisoners of hope." The moral sublimity of the Book is based upon its great underlying ideas.

Its heroes are heroes of faith, whatever may be the earthly admixture. Its fighting spirit attaches itself always to the realization of a God-given hope. This indeed is the fuller meaning of David's words. Infinitely above the literal battlefields of earth are the conflicts of the world's great ideas, its moral conceptions, its spiritual hopes and ambitions. When men's fingers tingle with enthusiasm for these, when men's hands are taught to grip these with a strength born of God—this is David's truth carried into the battlefields of life where moral and spiritual issues are tried.\*

5. As long as Christianity takes color from the Word of God, it will have a militant spirit. To this aggressive faith *impossible* will be, as Mirabeau said, "a blockhead of a word," and difficulties will be made "only to be overcome." The poet Tennyson expressed great admiration on one occasion for Garibaldi, the Italian patriot, whom Henry Taylor described as—

—“that gentle hero, who  
Dethroned an unjust King, and then withdrew  
To tend his farm.”

Garibaldi was visiting Lord Tennyson, and stretching his wounded leg out in the presence of the poet he said, "There's a campaign in me yet."† The

\* A secretary for Home Missions writes: "When I think of the nearly one million foreigners coming to our shores annually, and the open doors in Cuba and Porto Rico, my fingers tingle with enthusiasm." This is how God teaches our fingers to fight in this day of gospel opportunity.

† Memoir by his son, vol. ii, p. 4. "The joy of my father in heroism," writes his son, "whether of a past age or of the present, and his delight in celebrating it, are more than ever apparent."

courage of Christianity is inexhaustible. It is fed out of the literature of courage in the Bible. Old King Clovis, hearing the story of the crucifixion, exclaimed, "Would that I had been there with my brave Franks, his enemies must have trembled." The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews reaches the climax of his argument for a faithful Christian life, when he adds, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." The sublime courage of the Son of Man in his life and death is an inspirational quality in the gospel that can never be exhausted.

Christianity makes a strong appeal to the heroic in man. It calls for action; it summons to aggressive service. It is nothing daunted by difficulties; neither is it content to occupy a narrow circle. Its mission reaches out to the end of the earth because its spirit contains an indomitable courage. In short it furnishes "a moral equivalent of war."\* Wherever its sacred Book is known, men are inspired to do their best, and civilization takes on a militant air. Christianity would sheathe the sword of battle, but not the sword of the Spirit. The gospel is taught in terms of battle—the sword, the shield, the soldier, the armor, the fight. Christianity is not a theory for the Academy or the Porch; it cannot be shut up in cells and retreats. God is

\* "What we now need to discover in the social realm is the moral equivalent of war; something heroic that will speak to men as universally as war does, and yet will be as compatible with their spiritual selves as war has proved itself to be incompatible."—*Varieties of Religious Experience*, by William James.

still "teaching our fingers to fight." The progress of this militant faith must be indicated by something more than dress parade and "marking time"; Christianity must be fighting battles all the time. Nothing less than such a literature of courage as is furnished in the Bible would be adequate to support the fighting spirit of Christianity.

None have expressed the value of a literature of courage such as is furnished by the Bible and by the books that have reflected its spirit, better than Henry van Dyke in his address before the Pan-Presbyterian Council. "I want the books that help me out of the vacancy and despair of a frivolous mind, out of the tangle and confusion of a society that is busied in *bric-à-brac*, out of the meanness of unfeeling mockery and the heaviness of incessant mirth, into a loftier and serener region, where through the clear air of serious thoughts, I can learn to look soberly and bravely upon the mingled misery and splendor of human existence, and then go down with a cheerful courage to play a man's part in the life which Christ has ever ennobled by his divine presence." \*

\* "Christianity and Current Literature," address delivered at Liverpool, 1904.

## VIII

### THE CHARM OF LETTERS

It has been said that letters are the most personal form of literature. We are not accustomed to thinking of letters as containing the material of literature; but a moment's reflection will show that they occupy no inconsiderable place in literature. "The Life and Letters" is not unfamiliar as a literary title. It is natural to associate "letters" with "life." The publication of a volume of letters is usually welcomed by the reading public, and few public men are excused from this demand of literature. The demand is based on native curiosity. We are all more interested in persons than in events. We insist upon biography. Incidents apart from mind and life have no charm for us. We ask irresistibly, What of the man? How did he act? What was his bearing under difficulty? What were his inmost thoughts? What was the story of his inner life?

The habit of preserving letters is an interesting testimony to the values set upon them. There is a universal feeling that by letters we are brought closer than by any other means to the "touch of a vanished hand, the sound of a voice that is still." It is related of the widow of Schumann, the musical composer, that whenever she was about to play any of her husband's music in public, she would read over some of his old letters to her, written in the

lover days. Thus, she said, his very life seemed to fill her, and she was then better able to interpret his work. There are few households in the land that have not preserved in chest or drawers or pigeon-holes some bundles of old letters by which they of the present keep themselves in living contact with those of the past. The essential charm of letters lies in the stamp of personality which they bear. It is said that Mr. John Morley, author of the magnificent biography of William E. Gladstone, prepared himself for the task by examining over fifty thousand of the statesman's letters. What a revelation of personality in such a volume of correspondence! Knowledge comes to us with new value when it bears the fresh marks of personality upon it. The peril of abstraction is removed, and truth makes its appeal out of a living and concrete example.\*

The mind never quite recovers from the delightful surprise of finding letters in the New Testament. If men had been making the Bible, it would hardly have occurred to them to couch any considerable part of it in the form of letters. It would have seemed to them no doubt a sacrifice of stateliness, of that high degree of dignity which is supposed to be

\* One can imagine the thrill of feeling in the mind of the archaeologist who one day picked up, among the clay tablets found in the ruins of an ancient city, a letter from a soldier in the army to his sweetheart at home. The incident was related to the author on the deck of a steamer sailing up the Bosphorus. The letter ran about as follows:

“Dear Bylbia, I have been ordered with my regiment up the Euphrates, and cannot even come to say farewell. I shall return in April and then we shall be married. April is a good month for a wedding.”

consonant with Revelation. They would have cast the material in the form of treatises or essays, thinking thereby to make a book that would commend itself to the literary and scholarly tastes of men. How incalculable the loss! Think for a single moment of the robbery of the New Testament if the epistles had been omitted, or if learned religious disquisitions and compendiums of theology had been substituted for them. The fascination of biography would have been lost; local color and personal flavor would have been sacrificed; the intensified impression of a divine message coming through the experience of a man would have been modified; and the whole appeal to the imagination by the conception of personality would have been unused. A New Testament composed of religious treatises alone might have been solid enough and impressive enough; but it would have been far less human, far less approachable, far less attractive to the average man in those qualities that make for interest and useful fascination. What is the case with the New Testament? It cannot be viewed as anything less than a remarkable instance of the adaptation and approach of God to man in the Revelation that twenty-one of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament bear the name of epistles.\* These epistles are true letters, intended, of course, to be the vehicle of spiritual teaching, but always in the form of a

\* It is interesting to note that it was Roman, not Greek, example that was followed by the New Testament writers in penning epistles to the churches. The Greeks did not write letters.

See *An Introduction to the New Testament*, by Rev. Marcus Dods, D. D., p. 76.

concrete message—a message of man to men—with the enlivenment of local conditions, with the suggestiveness of many allusions to persons and incidents, and with the charm of biography ever present. Analyzing our feelings about the New Testament, we discover that the letters possess a distinct charm to the mind. They serve to make the Bible a familiar book to us; they tend to bring the matter of Revelation, to use Bacon's phrase, home "to our business and our bosoms"; they show us how natural is the origin of the Scripture, while it is at the same time so truly supernatural.\*

There are several distinct sources of interest in the letters of the New Testament that are worthy of note.

1. They show us the gospel in the setting of actual affairs. It was the boast of an early philosopher that philosophy never demeans itself by contact with the people. It is the high distinction of the Christian faith that it never shuns the closest contact with affairs. Of inestimable value to the world is the picture preserved to us in the New Testament epistles of how Christianity entered the arena of the world's life in the first century, and became a formative influence in determining spiritual history. No other faith has been so severely tested. Rising as with the clear light of a star out of the obscurity of Judea, it must learn to shine with undimmed splendor in the presence of the blackness, not alone of barbarian, but of enlightened, heathenism. Were

\* See a suggestive passage in Stalker's *Life of St. Paul*, especially the striking comparison between Paul and Cromwell, pp. 106-9.

ever such inexorable demands made of any religious system? It must prove its adequacy first of all for Jerusalem, with its multiplied traditions and ceremonial privileges. Then it must burst its bonds and reach out eagerly to the Gentile world, establishing its new centre in Antioch, the filth of whose river Orontes, they said in Rome, corrupted even the river Tiber. It must travel with Paul into the dark regions of the Asian Provinces, to meet the problems of barbarism in the Pisidian Antioch, and in Galatia. Then it must enter a still wider and more difficult area, as it crosses the Sea into the nearer confines of the Roman Empire, to let its light shine in Philippi and Thessalonica, in Athens, the intellectual centre of the world, and in Corinth, where the combined effect of heathen philosophy, art, and religion was to be seen in its most appalling poverty. At length it must enter the great city on the Tiber, the completest symbol of a unified world-power, must utter its voice in the Forum within sound of the Golden Milestone that bound the far-separated parts of the Empire together, and must write its record deeply upon the institutions and life of the city that still governs the world. What adjustments it had to make, what special needs and exigencies it had to face, what struggles and crises it had to endure, what tests of persecution and defection it had to encounter! The Christian Church must needs be carved forthwith out of the darkness of the heathen world and must make a mighty struggle for existence against overwhelming odds. Now it is the letters of the New Testament that tell the story of the first contact of Christianity with the world in many of its

leading centres of life, in Thessalonica, in Galatia, in Corinth, in Colosse, in Philippi, in Ephesus, in the Island of Crete, in Rome. Nor yet in the way of formal history; rather with the naïve informality, the unexpected local adaptations, the fascinating vistas of personal life and experience which are characteristic of the epistolary form.

With what interest, for example, do we turn the leaves of the two Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians, not alone to read his inspiring descriptions of the gospel, but also to discover on every page what Uhlhorn has called “the Conflict of Christianity with Heathenism.” How the pure faith of Christ entered a city reeking in heathen vice, and built up an institution that stood for domestic integrity and personal purity—the story of this is told with dramatic intensity in the Corinthian Epistles. The same letters also tell us how Christianity adjusted itself to difficult situations, how it met, for instance, the problem of the relation of Christian converts to their heathen relatives, and how it solved the difficult question of eating meat that had been offered to idols. Almost every one of Paul’s letters is an open window into some local situation, the study of which reveals to us the real conflict endured by the Christian faith. It might be thought that this fact puts a limitation upon the applicability of the letters. On the contrary, it intensifies our impression of their applicability, inasmuch as we discover that they were written to meet actual needs. It is for this reason quite impossible to appreciate the full force of the epistles apart from the circumstances for which they were first prepared; while at the same time it will be

found that similar conditions prevail in the modern church.

2. The epistles unconsciously reveal to us the fascination and the peril of growth. We say *unconsciously*, for they are in no sense formal histories of progress. Written for the most part to meet social needs, they reveal almost by inadvertence the stages of growth in the churches to which they were addressed, the rapidity of their advancement, and the interruptions they suffered. To a thoughtful mind, gifted with historical insight and imagination, the picture presented by one of Paul's churches is most engaging. We have a score of questions to ask—questions which ought always to be asked mentally in the study of these letters of the apostle. What is the effect of the gospel in the life of this company of believers? What progress have they made? What difficulties have they met in doctrine? What difficulties have they encountered in the Christian life? What troubles have arisen from without and from within? Have they proved themselves steadfast? Are they in any present danger? What persons stand out distinctly in the life of the church? What are their names and what part did they play? Let any reader of the New Testament approach the letters of Paul with questions such as these, and he will find himself presently absorbed in following the development of these first churches of Christ in Asia and Europe. As a mental occupation it is as exhilarating as watching the process of crystallization in the chemist's laboratory. The thrill of growth is communicated to us as we read, and we feel ourselves to be immediate spectators of the early scenes

in a drama which is still the central event in the world's life.

Nor yet is the growth of the early church depicted without the marks of struggle. The early church grew in negative as well as positive conditions. It is often a story of disappointment and tragic interruption. The hot iron of persecution seared its life; false teaching at times made fearful inroads upon Christian doctrine; and human imperfections, together with heathen immoralities, left dark stains upon the Christian name. The peril as well as the fascination of progress is here. Indirectly it is a source of inspiration. One who will enter sympathetically into the story of the early church as presented in the epistles is led to say—"If the early church of Christ could do its work against such great odds, surely there are no difficulties of the modern world to which the church should yield." Moreover the life of struggle in the early church did but reveal more fully the riches and adaptations of the gospel. We can be thankful, for example, for the little dissensions that arose in the church in Philippi, for it was to meet this lack of fellowship and humility among the members that Paul wrote the marvellous passage in the second chapter of his Epistle to the Philippians, wherein he sets the humility of Christ in his incarnation and sacrifice upon the Cross over against the selfish and dissentient spirit of his disciples, urging them to "let this mind be in them which was also in Christ Jesus."

The Thessalonian Epistles are an excellent illustration of the opportunity afforded in the letters of Paul for the study of growth in the Christian

Church. The first Epistle presents the picture of a church that had received the gospel eagerly and with manifestations of spiritual power; had at once joined in the activities of Christian service so as to make itself an example to other churches in promulgating the gospel; and had withal endured severe afflictions without flinching in fidelity to Christ. The apostle, being filled with anxiety for them, had already sent Timothy to comfort them and bring him word of their endurance in trial. Timothy has returned with a comforting report that gladdens the heart of the apostle. Yet there are some disturbing factors in his report. Heathen vice is present with its allurements. Moreover certain unsettling speculations have arisen among them about the fate of their Christian brethren who have already died. Shall they have no share in the return of Christ? Indeed, the expectation of Christ's return has proved a disquieting thought, and some have yielded so far to the agitation of it as to suffer loss of every-day diligence. With all these conditions in mind, Paul writes the first letter. The interval between the first and second letters is not long. The first letter has not subdued the trouble. Some of its expressions may even have been misunderstood. The question of the Lord's return threatens to become a speculative issue. They are using their time in the Thessalonian church in calculating upon the subject. Meantime a party of ecclesiastical idlers and busybodies is growing up in the church who are more concerned about Christ's return than about the Christian life itself. Paul now writes his second letter, making an ampler statement concerning the

Lord's return, reiterating his own faith and expectation, but cautioning them against being disturbed in the faithful and quiet performance of their Christian work. "The Lord direct your hearts," he writes, "into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ." It is an important and engaging picture of the halting progress of a Christian church of the first century, of how it contributed to the spread of the gospel amidst persecution, of how the ferment of Christian thought wrought actively among its members, and of how the over-emphasis of a single doctrine brought certain perils among them. No form of writing could so well reveal these conditions, making them realizable to the mind, as the letter form.

3. The letters of the New Testament bring us in close touch with the persons who wrought in the first stages of gospel history. It has already been suggested that personality is the essential charm of letters. Indeed personality is the real charm of literature in general. A recent writer \* in an interesting essay defends the proposition "that literature is autobiography." "When we come upon something that strangely moves us, we may be sure, as a rule, that the words and thoughts have been passed through the fires of life." "Without the personal element," he adds, "no work of fiction is vital"; and he proceeds to quote a line which Mrs. Browning was fond of reciting—"Fool," said my muse to me, "look in thine heart and write." Now the vital element of experience constitutes a very great element

\* *Letters on Life*, by Claudio Clear (W. Robertson Nicoll), p. 14.

of value in the New Testament letters. Paul and Peter and John and James and Jude are writing themselves unconsciously into their apostolic letters.\* The process of inspiration cannot prevent their doing this; indeed the personalism of the gospel is readily incorporated in the method of inspiration and greatly to its enrichment.

The autobiographic element is especially prominent in the writings of the Apostle Paul. The man Paul is behind his letters, not obtrusively or egotistically, but irresistibly. We do not find ourselves objecting to his use of personal pronouns, while every hint of experience seems to bring us in closer contact with the activities of the spiritual life. It is of no slight interest to the world to possess in these letters the unintended picture of the chief apostle. The man and his message are indissolubly connected. The gospel comes to us personalized in his letters. His vicissitudes in service, his physical endurance, his contact with men, all these intensify our interest in the gospel through the medium of its representative. One cannot read his letters without forming a mental image of the man—his weak “bodily presence,” his “contemptible speech,” his earnestness and unfailing courage. The hints of his spiritual experiences—such as the third-heaven rapture—possess unfailing interest to us; while the reference to a “thorn in the flesh” has a personal meaning for us that reveals the strength of the man.

\*The “manly naturalness” of Peter, and the “uncompromising moral forthrightness” of James stand out upon every page. The “brief quivering sentences” of John are a part of his message.

The letters, moreover, especially the letters of Paul, contain a galaxy of names and faces. To read his letters is like traversing the bridge of pictures between the two great galleries in Florence. So abundant are the biographical references that a ready imagination finds it not difficult to reconstruct in part the personal life of the early churches. For example, Epaphroditus and the Philippian Church; or, the interesting family of Philemon and the Colossian Church, with Epaphras the minister of that church; or, the close intimacy between Paul and Timothy; or, the friendship between the apostle and Luke, "the beloved physician," like that between Johnson and Boswell; or, the hints of the apostle's dependence upon Titus, whose coming upon a certain occasion encouraged him. What kind of a man must he have been who "oft refreshed him"? Who were the men of whom he said that they "had been a comfort unto him"? Of whom did he say—he is "my very heart"? To what church did he refer as "my joy and crown"? Of what woman did he say "she hath been a succorer of many and of mine own self"? Who was it that served with him "as a child serveth a father"? Which church remembered him oftenest with their gifts? Which church would have plucked out their eyes for him? Who was it that "hazarded his life for him"? In which epistle is there an entire chapter devoted to names? Paul had a genius for friendship. How magnanimous he was towards his friends. It has been said that when Charles Dickens wrote his *David Copperfield*, he told more of himself than is told in Forster's three volumes of biography. Paul's never-failing

topic is "Jesus Christ and him crucified"; yet he could not write about his Master without writing about himself. His letters are the best illustration of the spiritual principle that controlled his life—"To me to live is Christ." \*

The charm of letters finds an impressive illustration in one of the letters of Paul that is probably read the least of all. Let us try to reproduce for ourselves the circumstances in which it was written. The interest of the letter centres in a wealthy family of Colosse, where one of the churches of the Lycus valley was situated. The indications of their wealth lay in the fact of their influence and their ownership of slaves. What is more important—they were a Christian family. The son of the family became a minister, and so interested were they in the progress of the gospel that they were accustomed to open their home for the services of the

\* Canon Farrar writes: "When we pass to the remainder of the New Testament, it is no small gain to us that it mainly consists of epistles. No form of literature was better calculated, in the divine economy, to give full sway to the *personal* element,—the confidentialness, the yearning emotion, the spontaneity, the touches of simple, familiar, informal reality, which enable us to feel that we are in closest contact with the sacred writers. The unchecked individuality of utterance which marks an epistle renders it impossible for us to regard the apostolic writers as abstractions; it enables us, as it were, to lay our hands upon their breasts, and to feel the very beating of their hearts. We are won by the sense that we are listening to the teaching of friends, not to vague voices in the air." He refers in particular to "the intensity, the exquisite sensitiveness, the biographical digressions, the pathetic experiences, the dauntless courage, the yearning for sympathy, the flashes of emotion which we constantly find" in the writings of Paul.

church. The names of the members of this family have been preserved, constituting an interesting family group, Philemon and his wife Apphia, and their son Archippus. The chief interest of the letter, however, centres in a slave of the household. He was probably a Phrygian. How he entered the home of Philemon is a matter for conjecture. The slave-mart was in common use in that day; and both the Greek and Latin languages contain words for *auctioneer* or *crier*. This slave had a peculiar name, and we cannot resist the feeling that his name had something to do with his becoming the slave of Philemon.

It may have been on this wise. Philemon may have been present one day when the Phrygian slave was offered for sale. In a moment of pause the auctioneer, with the skill that is common to the trade, turned to the slave to ask, "What is your name?" "My name is Onesimus," he replied. Hereby hangs the tale. It is one of the most interesting names in the New Testament. It is Greek, and it means *useful* or *profitable*. It is needless to say how a keen auctioneer would press the meaning of such a name. "Buy a slave whose very name holds out the promise of what he will be." The upshot was that Philemon bought Onesimus. Perhaps he was thinking, too, of how in his household he might be taught to be profitable to Christ. All went well, until one morning the steward of the house reported to the master, that Onesimus, the "*profitable*" slave, had stolen Philemon's purse and gone away in the nighttime. Imagine the dismay. There is no disappointment so keen as that of the discovery of a discrepancy be-

tween a man's character and his name. It was Christian sorrow, too, that Philemon felt.

Little imagination is required for the remainder of the story. We know where Onesimus went; he went to Rome. The dregs of humanity were collected in the great city on the Tiber. The runaway thought that he would be safe in Rome. He flung himself recklessly into its sinful life. He made his home perhaps in one of the *insulae*, or tenements, of Rome. He found his way perhaps to the street *Suburra*, the street of sin. The excesses of the city soon exhausted his ill-gotten gains. Soon he was wandering the streets of the city, alone and penniless. Conscience, that "silent court of justice in the breast," began to accuse him. Philemon's Christian teaching came back to him. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. One day he followed a group of persons into a private dwelling and found himself in the presence of a small man in chains, with a Roman soldier at his side. He was talking—talking of one named Jesus. Onesimus had heard this name before, in Philemon's household. In that hired dwelling in Rome under the influence of the prisoner of the Lord, Onesimus, the runaway slave, was brought under the influence of the gospel, and committed to the Christian life. His story came out at once; he could not keep it to himself with the new light that had come to him. And now comes the strange part of the story. We cannot speak of such things as accidental. "Who is your master?" inquired the teacher. "His name is Philemon," replied the converted slave, "and he lives in Colosse." "Why, he is my friend," exclaimed the teacher, "and,

indeed, it was I who led him to Christ. Passing strange it is that God should send his runaway slave to me here in my prison, that I might find him for Christ also."

A close friendship grew up between the prisoner and Onesimus. The teacher would gladly have kept his new convert with him, but he knew that this would be unjust. Onesimus must go back to his master and make amends to him, and prove to him especially that he had learned the better way of life. "But you shall not go unaccompanied," said the teacher; "you shall take a letter from me to your master, which will open the way for your reception." And this is how Paul the Apostle, a prisoner in Rome, came to write the little letter of twenty-five verses, which we know as "The Epistle to Philemon," and which we have so often passed by, because we found little to interest us in it.

Now with this recital in mind, in which, after all, there is a very slight element of imagination, let the reader read the Epistle again. Its charm, first of all, is in its style, which is thoroughly epistolary. "Cicero never wrote with greater elegance," said Erasmus. The perfect Christian courtesy, moreover, which breathes throughout the letter stamps Paul as a Christian gentleman. Christianity produces refinement of thought and utterance. The chief fascination, however, is in the references to Onesimus. Almost a third of the letter is taken up with greetings. Then the apostle approaches the main subject at the eighth verse—"Wherefore, though I have all boldness in Christ to enjoin thee that which is befitting, yet for love's sake I rather

beseech thee, being such a one as Paul the aged, and now a prisoner of Christ Jesus." Surely there must have been a little genuine Christian humor in Paul's mind, full of the glad rejoicing of the faith, as he went on in verses ten and eleven to make his famous play on the meaning of the slave's name, "I beseech thee for my child, whom I have begotten in my bonds, *Onesimus*, who was aforetime *unprofitable* to thee, but now is *profitable* to thee and to me." What a sudden insight into the real meaning of a Christian life—to cease to be unprofitable and become profitable.

In beautiful and courteous sentences the letter runs on. "I would fain have kept him with me, but without thy mind I would do nothing." Then he lifts the thought of Philemon to this level—"Perhaps God was at work in this whole matter, perhaps he was parted from thee for a season, that thou shouldst have him forever, no longer as a servant, but more than a servant, a brother beloved." Another sudden insight—into the brotherhood, the fraternalism, of the gospel. "The word emancipation seems to be trembling on his lips," says Lightfoot, "and yet he does not once utter it." Then a delicate reference to the theft. "If he hath wronged thee at all, or oweth thee aught, put that to mine account. I, Paul, write it with mine own hand (an autograph letter!), I will repay it." Ah, Paul, poor tent-maker, now a prisoner, what hast thou wherewith to pay? Not once does he doubt that Philemon will deal with this matter in the most Christian way. If it come to payment, Philemon, remember "that thou owest to me even thine own self besides." A

few sentences more and then the letter closes. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, Amen."

Just the story of how a runaway slave in the first century was led to Christ and restored to his master—and this a book of the New Testament! How otherwise could the power of the gospel to overcome sin, and meet at the same time the social conditions of the day, have been so beautifully and impressively told as in this charming little letter of Paul to Philemon? Infinitely more precious to us is the New Testament because it contains such letters of life.\*

\* Somewhat in this form the author has told the story of the Epistle to Philemon to many audiences, and invariably with this expression resulting, "I never knew that the New Testament was so interesting."

## IX

### PURPLE AND FINE LINEN

“BLUE and Purple and Scarlet and fine Linen.” From the twenty-fifth chapter of Exodus to the end of the book this descriptive phrase occurs more than a score of times. It is the passage in which the heavenly pattern of the Tabernacle is let down to earth; and it is doubtful if the place of Beauty in Life has ever elsewhere received so strong an emphasis. When John Ruskin came to write of the “Seven Lamps of Architecture”—the building of life as well as the building of houses—he could not omit Beauty from the shining seven.

Canon Farrar states that he once heard the poet Tennyson dwell on the tremendous impression derived from the words—“And again they said Hallelujah: and her smoke riseth up forever and ever.” He himself adds that it may be doubted whether any passage in our greatest writers can equal the magic and haunting charm of the last chapter of Revelation, with its lovely opening words:

“And he showed me a pure river of Water of Life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the Tree of Life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the Tree were for the healing of the Nations.”

The characteristic thing, however, about the beauty of the Scripture is that it is not alone the

possession of poets and writers: it is a natural, a world possession, like the beauty of a landscape. Among all the properties of the world, both visible and invisible, there is nothing that men so surely possess as the gracious, pervasive qualities of the Book, which more than any other is the book of the people. Father Faber's words about the attractiveness of the Protestant Bible as one reason for the strength of Protestantism will illustrate our thought. "Who will say," he asks, "that the uncommon beauty and marvellous English of the Protestant Bible is not one of the great strongholds of heresy in this country? It lives on the ear like a music which can never be forgotten, like the sound of church bells, which the convert hardly knows how he can forego. Its felicities often seem to be almost things rather than mere words. It is part of the national mind and the anchor of national seriousness. The power of all the griefs and trials of man is hidden beneath its words. In the length and breadth of the land there is not a Protestant, with one spark of seriousness about him, whose spiritual biography is not in his Saxon Bible."

It is true that the literary study of the Scripture may be pursued in such a manner as to yield very little spiritual result, much as one might admire the rich arabesque of a Damascus blade, and miss its marvellous flexibility and the keenness of its edge. Nevertheless it is an important method of enamouring the heart that should not be neglected. Doubtless the Old Testament worshipper had his own sense of pride in the beauty of the Tabernacle. Worship must have seemed to him none the less worthy and

all the more fascinating because it was centred in a Sanctuary which did not lack the touch of Beauty, which was not careless of the form in the wealth of spirit. Exactly this combination—an inexhaustible wealth of meaning within, clothed in multiplied forms of beauty without—is found in the Bible. Now the literary study of the Bible consists not alone in the dissection of these outward forms; rather in the study of these forms as the appropriate vehicles of expression. The noblest forms of architecture, as Mr. Ruskin teaches, are those which, besides being attractive in form, have an inward story to tell, a truth to set forth. The *baroque* and *rococo* forms of architecture could only maintain themselves in an age that was more concerned with form than with meaning. The ornament of the Bible is not ornament tacked on. It is organic beauty, the kind of beauty that is rooted in substance, that grows out of character, that interprets an inner meaning. This definition of the literary study of the Bible at once furnishes both the teacher and the preacher with a strong instrument of appeal. It is the same appeal that is furnished by the careful study of Nature—the impression of infinite care and pains, the evidence of appreciation in the Author of those instincts of the human mind that love the best. Even as God has made it easy to yield to the fascination of Nature, so he has made it easy to love his Book. Nor is it the least of the duties of the religious teacher to reveal the sources of interest for the mind to be found in the form of the Scripture.

The appreciation of the Bible as Literature is a distinctive part in the process of religious education.

As such it is not by any means confined to persons of literary taste. The educational qualities of the Book are quite within the reach of the average mind. Proof of this is found in the fact that every community has its uneducated persons who are unconscious students of the literary values of the Bible. They could write no dissertations upon the subject; they would indeed find it difficult to explain their own feelings; it is nevertheless plain that they cherish the same feelings for the finer things in the Scripture that become with the literary student a matter of technique. The popular response to the simple beauties of the Word is very much the same as the popular feeling for music. A popular strain in music, a simple ditty, a phrase in the language of life,—these find ever an open heart. Let Jenny Lind or Madame Patti sing "Home, Sweet Home," and every heart is responsive. Such popular interest depends not upon technical knowledge; yet it is, since every fine art is reducible in the last analysis to great simplicities, the same in essence as the more technical appreciation of the artist. We insist, therefore, that there is a great unused power for instruction in the ability of the people to appreciate what we call, for lack of a better name, the literary qualities of the Scripture. These are indeed the simplicities of form and expression which lie very near to Nature's heart. Whatever is musical, for example, in the language; whatever is touched alike with high simplicity and grandeur; whatever strikes in upon the solitude of the heart and creates a sense of companionship; whatever refines, sharpens, dignifies, and elevates life; whatever contributes new

formulae for thought, new interpretations in language of the mystery of life and eternity; whatever is fine and vigorous and noble, producing mental *verve* and eagerness—such are the qualities that lie upon the surface in the Book of Books—yet not only on the surface, for they are integrally connected with the inner life of the Scripture. What Niebuhr, the historian, says of Livy among the Romans and Thucydides among the Greeks, is true in a very real way of the Scripture—it exercises “a gentle despotism over the eyes and ears” of its readers. We maintain that the average audience is susceptible to this same “gentle despotism,” however it may not easily define the process, and that it is a wise teacher who will fit himself to cast the spell of the beauty and fineness of the Word about the people. Here indeed lies a method of approach, a means of establishing interest, which is none the less religious because it is an appreciation of outward form. To many a congregation it would be, not only a pleasing departure, but a veritable revelation of unsuspected riches, if the minister in his pulpit would now and then dwell upon the qualities of the Book that constitute its palpable sources of attraction.

We have already commented, in other chapters of this volume, on certain literary attractions of the Book, such as its History, its Letters, its Heroic Element, its Field of Imagination, its Narrative or Story form; and we have referred incidentally to other literary features. It is not our purpose to dwell at length upon the literary variety of the Scripture. Many able and reverent students have in recent years contributed greatly to our appreciation

of the singular and inexhaustible literary riches of the Word. It is no loss, rather a distinct gain, to recognize that the Bible contains almost every variety of literary form—essays, epigrams, sonnets, stories, sermons, songs, philosophical observations and treatises, histories and legal documents, letters of friendly counsel, dramas, and love songs. “Its literature embraces national anthems of Israel in various stages of its history, war ballads with rough refrains, hymns of defeat and victory, or for triumphant entrance into a conquered capital; pilgrim songs, and the chants with which the family parties beguiled the journeys to the great feasts; fanciful acrostics to clothe sacred meditations or composed in compliment to a perfect wife; even the games of riddles, which belong to such social meetings as Samson’s wedding. With the single exception of Humorous Literature, for which the Hebrew temperament has little fitness, the Bible presents as varied an intellectual food as can be found in any national literature.” \*

\* *The Bible as Literature*, first essay, by Professor Richard G. Moulton, pp. 4, 5. The element of Humor, however, especially in the form of satire and irony, is by no means lacking in the Scripture. A little volume was issued several years ago by Rev. M. D. Shutter on the *Wit and Humor* of the Bible. It is unnecessary to say that the humorous element of Scripture is never without a moral purpose. A fine example of biblical satire is Isaiah’s description of the making of an idol (xliv: 9-20). After the idol worshipper has baked bread and warmed himself with parts of a forest tree, “the residue thereof he maketh a god”! It is a sufficient answer to idolatry. Professor Moulton has won the gratitude of multitudes for his illuminating studies of the Scripture. His volume, *The Literary Study of the Bible*, is the

The impressiveness of the language of the English Bible has become proverbial. Its influence upon the speech and thought of the people in producing simplicity and refinement is unmistakable. Scriptural beauty is a recognized quality of literary style. Wherever men know the Scripture, language is at once more clear and more chaste; warmer and fuller of light. John Ruskin and Abraham Lincoln, though entirely different as types, are alike in their biblical force and simplicity of expression. Only one who had been strongly influenced by biblical method could have expressed in fewer than three hundred words in the Gettysburg address "the innermost meaning of the struggle and the victory in the life of the nation." There is a striking resemblance, both in this immortal address and in the second Inaugural with its "grand colors of biblical diction," to the addresses of the Old Testament prophets, notably those of the prophet Amos. Let the reader, for example, read the second Inaugural with its measured tread of advancing thought and its occasional sharp staccato sentences, together with its prevailing optimism; and then turn to the last chapter of the prophecy by Amos to read his sublime

accepted text-book for such study. See also his *Short Introduction to the Literature of the Bible* and *Biblical Masterpieces*, also the introductions to the different volumes of the Modern Reader's Bible. "The point to be impressed upon the reading world at the present time," says Professor Moulton, "is that the Bible is, above all things, an interesting literature. No class of readers can afford to neglect it, for with the single exception noted above (humor), every variety of literary interest is represented in the books of the Old and New Testaments." This opens up a wholly new source of interest in the Book.

description of the righteousness of God, closing with the beautiful picture of the Restoration :

“ And I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them ; and they shall plant vineyards and drink the wine thereof ; and they shall also make gardens and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land, which I have given them, saith the Lord their God.”

“I have been acquainted with David Hume and William Pitt,” said the Duchess of Gordon, “and therefore am not afraid to converse with any man.” In a similar way one is possessed of a certain consciousness of power in expression who has drank deeply at the “pure well of English undefiled” in the English Bible. It is preëminently the language of human life; it runs the entire gamut of the human feelings; more truly than any other it is the literature of intellectual and rhetorical prerogative. A close observer is often able to detect the influence of the Bible upon conversation, not so much by the presence of quotation as by the fibrous strength of language, betokening a strong grasp of the facts of life. In his notes to the *Biglow Papers* Mr. Lowell shows how the “sinewy and expressive diction” of the Bible had become a part of the Puritan fibre. *Elle était nourrie de la Bible*, said M. Heger of his English pupil Charlotte Brontë. The exquisite and stately English of *Jane Eyre* is thus explained. It was a favorite idea of the poet Wordsworth, to which Coleridge gave his philosophical approval, that simple and uneducated minds, fed on the English

Bible as staple food, would insensibly acquire a vivid and majestic speech peculiarly fitted for the uses of poetry.\* The forceful quality of Scotch preaching, and even more its rich pictorial and imaginative quality, are beyond question due to the early impregnation of the Scotch mind with the forms of Scripture utterance. As one who learns a strange language wins the victory when he begins to think in the foreign tongue, so a teacher of the Word attains an important qualification when his own thought begins to run in the mould of the Book. Professor Stalker's idea of saturating the mind with the words and spirit of the Bible, in order that from the soil thus nourished all forms of good thinking and good living may spontaneously spring—is the foundation of Scripture pedagogy.

An example of the “noble naturalness” of the Bible, its fineness of form and sweep of utterance, may be cited in the Psalmist's famous description of the Harvest in the Sixty-fifth Psalm.

“Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice,  
 Thou visitest the Earth and waterest it,  
 Thou greatly enrichest it ;  
 The river of God is full of water :  
 Thou providest them corn, when thou hast so prepared the earth.  
 Thou waterest her furrows abundantly ;  
 Thou settlest the ridges thereof ;  
 Thou makest it soft with showers ;

\* Most of the illustrations of this paragraph are taken from an article in *The Century Magazine* of February, 1903, “The Literary Loss of the Bible,” by Rollo Ogden.

Thou blessest the springing thereof ;  
Thou crownest the year with thy goodness ;  
And thy paths drop fatness."

It will be noticed that the language of this sublime passage keeps in close touch with the facts of nature ; yet it has about it also a tone of majesty, a large conception of things as they are, that carries the mind irresistibly, as by a sweeping victory of interpretation, up to that high plane of idealism where religion flourishes. If it be said that this Psalm represents the flower of Hebrew poetry and therefore is necessarily of impressive form, it is well to turn to the rare prose of the Sermon on the Mount, or to the exhilarating periods of the Apostle Paul, as examples of the purple and fine linen of the Book in those portions where beauty is less to be expected. What can exceed in literary splendor, not to speak of its glorious affirmation of Christian thought, the Apostle Paul's description of the Being and Authority of Christ in his double Headship over the Universe and the Church, found in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians ?

" The Son of His love ! in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins ; who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all Creation ; for in him were all things created, in the Heavens and upon the Earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers ; all things have been created through him, and unto him : and he is before all things and in him all things consist. And he is the Head of the body, the Church : who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead ; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence."

There is something atmospheric in the influence of this lofty description : something that is truly per-

vasive of thought and feeling. More than anything else, we should wish to say of it that it contains the true eloquence of faith. "If you want to be eloquent, young gentlemen," an old professor of rhetoric used to say to his classes, "learn long passages of the Bible by heart." "If there is aught of eloquence in me," said Daniel Webster, "it is because I learned the Scripture at my mother's knee." It is authoritatively stated of the great orator that he did not think himself prepared to appear before the United States Senate in the delivery of his immortal orations "until he had taken as a tonic the eighth Psalm and the fortieth chapter of Isaiah."

The masterful impressiveness of the language of Scripture is no doubt due in part to the value of separate words. Nowhere in all literature is there greater choice and care in the use of words. An enthusiastic admirer of Macaulay calls attention to the fact that the historian never uses a pronoun where he can use a noun; hence his clearness and precision. In the Bible there are innumerable instances of the distinctive valuation of words. Bengel even went so far as to say that "whoever understands twenty great words understands the Bible." Coleridge called the Epistle to the Romans "the profoundest writing in existence." It is certainly not easy to grasp: nevertheless the key is found in two words, *righteousness* and *justification*. In reading the Gospel according to John one must determine the value of such expressions as "The Word" (*Logos*), "Belief," "Life." In Colossians one must take into account the word "Fulness," in Ephesians

the expression “heavenly places,” in Philippians “joy” and “rejoice.” In the Gospel according to Matthew “that it might be fulfilled” is the significant expression. In First Thessalonians the words that carry the meaning of the entire epistle are the “coming of the Lord” (*παρονόμια*). In the First Epistle of John “fellowship” is the determinative word. Emerson said of Montaigne that his words were “vascular and alive.” “Cut these words and they will bleed,” he declared. The Bible makes a strong appeal to the language faculty of the mind. Its words march like an army upon us, sometimes surprising us by ambuses of thought, again sweeping us away with great inspirations and impulses of irresistible ideas. Happy is the teacher who is sensitive to the value of words in the Scripture, and is able to make efficient use of them in instruction.

The style of the Scripture is not always the same. The Book of Genesis and the epistles of Paul, for example, exhibit a marked contrast. Yet the style is prevailingly simple. Again and again have teachers of English style recommended their pupils to acquaint themselves with the Bible. An eminent medical professor suggests to his students that they may obtain a liberal education, if not that of a scholar, at least that of a gentleman, by reading for half an hour every night before going to sleep and keeping a book open on the table in the morning. For this he suggests ten books that should be close friends—the Old and New Testaments, Shakespeare, Montaigne, Plutarch’s Lives, Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, *Religio Medici*, *Don Quixote*, Emerson, and

Holmes. And now comes a Professor of Rhetoric \* in one of the great universities, with a little volume entitled *How to Write—a Handbook based on the English Bible*, in the preface of which the author says, “all that this book presumes to teach from the Bible is how to write.” It is a common experience to discover in the case of our most virile and most simple writers that they have imbibed unconsciously the style of the Scripture. The influence of the English Bible in keeping our speech “simple, and direct, and unstilted” is unquestioned. “Euphuistic dandyism and Johnsonese magniloquence have been slain by its homely eloquence.” Attempts to *refine* the style of the Scripture have uniformly proved as disastrous as trying to brighten the sunbeam or paint the lily. In 1833 a New England clergyman published an edition of the New Testament “for the literary and accomplished gentleman.” A few examples of the “improved style” of this edition will serve to emphasize the simplicity of the biblical style as we know it.

“When thou art beneficent, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand performs.”

“Contemplate the lilies of the field, how they advance.”

“At that time Jesus took occasion to say, I entirely concur with thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth.”

“Every plantation which my Heavenly Father has not cultivated shall be extirpated.”

“Be not surprised that I announce to thee, Ye must be reproduced.”

“There are numerous apartments in my Father’s temple: if not, I would have informed you.”

\* Charles Sears Baldwin, A. M., Ph. D., Assistant Professor of Rhetoric in Yale University.

An excellent illustration this is of the kind of writing we might have suffered from, if it had not been for the dominant influence of the strong and simple Saxon of our English Bible.\* A recent writer in a New York newspaper complains of the "primitive and amorphous" style of the Scripture. "The first four verses of the first chapter of Genesis, with the clauses loosely connected by 'ands,' are examples of how not to make sentences." The writer proceeds—"As mere pieces of narrative the stories of David and Abraham, or even of the Prodigal Son, are by no means incomparable." It is not held that the Scripture was written for rhetorical purposes, to furnish classroom models of style in sentence and paragraph construction. The objectionable "ands" of the first verses of Genesis, as every Hebrew student knows, are carried over directly from the Hebrew method of sentence-making, and are not of necessity at home in the best English style. Nevertheless it is scarcely becoming in a newspaper writer to complain of the rhetoric of the Bible. Its precision and simplicity, its easy picturesqueness, its rapidity of motion, its "swift fresco strokes," its power of literary reticence,—these are the very qualities that one would gladly see in the public press. It would be interesting to see a revised edition of the description of the Creation, or of the immortal parable of the Prodigal, after the prevailing style of the modern newspaper! It is no wonder that the veteran newspaper editor, Mr. Chas. A. Dana, advised young men who are preparing for

\* See article by Washington Gladden in *The Outlook*, June 27, 1896.

newspaper work to familiarize themselves with the Bible and mark its "sublime simplicity that never exaggerates." In his *Principles of Success in Literature* George Henry Lewes commends to the student "the masterly plainness of Genesis."

We do not attempt here an exhaustive study of what Professor Moulton has called the "literary morphology" of the Bible. The presence of the principal forms of literature in the Scripture, such as narrative, epigram, epic, and lyric, furnishes abundant opportunity for the study of literary forms. We are more concerned, however, to assist the average reader in appreciating the impressionistic effect of the Bible. "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined forth." What was true of the Tabernacle and the Temple is also true of the Word of God. Its beauty is a method of interpretation as well as a source of mental and spiritual fascination. It is perhaps conceivable that the Book might have contained "no poetry, no music, no kindling eloquence"; but such a supposition does not commend itself to our minds. The language of the Scripture is often analogical rather than logical, as has been said of the sermons of one of our greatest masters of pulpit expression, Phillips Brooks. It bristles with suggestions, it abounds in a certain undefined power of analysis and interpretation, it is instinct with life and experience, it breaks through the lines of mental resistance and encamps within the precincts of the memory and the heart, it casts its light far out upon the pathway of life and summons the soul to the heights of endeavor. Reference has already been made to the *sentence-power* of the Bible. "Let there

be light," "Prepare to meet thy God," "God is love," "God so loved the world," "God is light," "Suffer the little children," "The glory of God in the face of Jesus," "The wages of sin is death," "To be carnally minded is death," "There is therefore now no condemnation," "In my Father's house are many mansions"—there are sentences of the Book that contain the heartbeat of the truest poetry ever written, others that are like the drumbeat in battle, others that strike across our spiritual fog the radiance of a great Light, others that utter unending warnings for the careless life of sin, others that beckon us across all the swamp and morass of sorrow, sin, and despair, into the possession of a great Hope. "The truth," says Washington Gladden, "about God's love for man and man's life in God cannot be told in cold logical formularies; the words into which it is poured will glow and burn; the sentences which are charged with it will fall into rhythmic beat and reverberation. The hope and joy and glory of it are the best of it, and these cannot be put into logical propositions."

We insist therefore that an effective handling of the Scripture will not be careless of the forms of the Revelation, even while it is chiefly concerned with its content. God is not careless of the forms of truth: neither can we afford to be careless. The soul is often captivated by *sound* before it yields to *sense*. If the students of our theological schools could somehow in the development of the curriculum be brought under the *spell* of the Bible, could be captivated by its fineness, could have their imagination stirred by its great appeals to life, they would come forth ready

to do more effective work with the material furnished to them. We do not for a moment underrate the value of technical training for the student. There is, however, a certain *spirit* of the Book, which is a thing of its outward form, but still more of its inner life—that best of beauty which pictures cannot paint, as Bacon has said—and to know this spirit, this feeling, this life of the Scripture, is the beginning of enthusiasm. We can agree therefore with Matthew Arnold when he says, “To understand that the language of the Bible is fluid, passing, and literary, not rigid, fixed, and scientific, is the first step towards a right understanding of the Bible.” For us this sentence expresses, not so much a theological attitude towards the Scripture as the record of authority, as it does a due recognition of the capacities, the permutations, the flexibilities, the possibilities of language, as illustrated in the Book. Modern students and teachers of the Bible would do well to hark back to Horace Bushnell’s profound discussion of the nature of language in the introduction to his *God in Christ*. It is impossible after reading this penetrative analysis to be careless of the style of the Bible. Its purple and fine linen are seen to be integral parts in the purpose of the Author; whilst the fascination of its form is felt also to be a part of its pedagogical power.

A practical consideration may be suggested in this connection for teachers of the Book. The *power of expression* is very often an unused power with modern teachers of the Book. The church is in need, for example, of a company of trained persons who can charm the ears and hearts of little children

by the reading of the narratives and poems of the Bible. The language gift of children is the most active one they possess. The foundations of taste are laid here in the sounds that strike the ear, in the rhythm that penetrates the heart and tingles in the pulse. Many such teachers are found within the home. A recent writer affirms that "to have lain on the hearth-rug and listened to one's mother read aloud was a liberal education."\* Many a person of adult age to-day is grateful for the early installation of Scripture beauty in the mind during the sensitive years of childhood. Not the less may the minister in his pulpit covet the power of expression for the sake of fascinating the minds of his hearers with the Word. With the cultivation of this power the public reading of the Scripture might be made a real process of education, words and sentences might be made to preach their sermon alone, and many minds might be opened to the love of the Word through the charm of its outward form and sound. Reference has been made to Webster's use of the Bible in preparation for public speech. His public use of the Scripture is said to have been most impressive. Even when a lad he read the Bible with such expression that the teamsters who stopped to water their horses often called upon Webster's boy to read the Bible to them. One gentleman relates that he never obtained such exalted ideas of the majesty of God and the dignity of man as he received upon hearing Daniel Webster on a clear night in the open air recite the eighth Psalm. We are not suggesting stilted

\* Thomas W. Higginson in an interesting volume of reminiscence entitled *Cheerful Yesterdays*.

oratory for the pulpit—nothing is more pitiful—rather we are suggesting the study of how in simple and natural ways, through the power of expression, to engage the mind with the singular fascination of the style of the Scripture. Carlyle's phrase for such gift of expression is "illuminative reading." Happy is he who can read the Bible in an interpretative way, so as to bring out its subtle fascination. Much reading of the Bible aloud is a valuable help in this direction.

It is sufficient to urge in concluding this discussion that the grip of these things upon the average mind is a real and valuable part in biblical education. We are convinced that if methods could be adopted in the home and the Sabbath School for producing in young minds a real liking for the Scripture, there would be in time fewer adults who would regard the Bible as uninteresting. Such methods might well proceed along literary, rather than religious lines. That is, for permanent educational values, it would be better with little children to lay relatively less stress upon the effort to convey the religious lesson, to point a moral, and to give greater attention to producing affection and feeling for the Book itself. This is, in fact, no new discovery in pedagogy. Its secret is the old one of *interest*. The principle, however, has just begun to receive attention in biblical instruction. We maintain that the matter of first importance is to interest the child in the Bible itself. A due recognition of this principle would almost revolutionize the teaching of children. It might in due time, to adopt Bushnell's idea of the "out-populating power of the Christian stock," fill

our churches with men and women possessed of an original and inextinguishable love of the Book. A new generation of Bible-lovers can never be realized unless the foundations be laid in the minds of children.

Nor is the case very different with the adult mind. The grip of interest has been loosened. The problem of the church is to renew the hold of the Bible upon the mind. We need a decade or more of biblical preaching. We need ten thousand sermons and addresses that are calculated to stimulate interest in the Book. We need in the church a new era of enthusiasm for the Bible. To bring this to pass will require not less emphasis of authority, not less of religious instruction; but it will require more of the humanistic element in religious education, a fuller exposition of the *culture-power* of the Book, a stronger conception of it as the "literature of power," a quickening of respect at all points for the Word, a new realization of the Bible as life's true *vade mecum*. Whatsoever will help men to see that the Bible is God's rich and full provision for the mental and spiritual life of the race should find place in the method of the teacher and the preacher. Therefore "the purple and fine linen" of the Book must not be overlooked.

## X

### THE BIBLE AND AFFAIRS

THE present-day leader of scientific thought,\* who has counselled students of the facts of life to keep their minds sweet by being saturated with the Bible and Plato, with Homer, Shakespeare, and Milton, has suggested a view of the Book which is not to be overlooked in estimating the power of its fascination over men, and in defining the ways and means of extending its usefulness.

No other title that is given to the Bible is so suggestive of its potent sway among men as this—*The Book of Life*. While for many this may stand as a somewhat technical and institutional expression of its theological value, for many others it is clothed in the warmth and color of life itself, in the wealth and blessedness of experience. It is true that the church is expected to pursue constructive and defensive methods for the Bible in order to produce in the minds of men strong conceptions of authority. Such tactics are especially necessary in an age of criticism. But it is equally true that the church, through its teachers, must pursue such methods with the Bible as are calculated to produce vital conceptions of its power. By *vital conceptions* we mean those conceptions that arise from a deeper source than any

\* Dr. Wm. Osler. This passage from *Science and Immortality* has already been quoted. See p. 66.

mere mechanical process; that are, relatively speaking, less concerned with establishing the truth of the Bible and more concerned with obtaining its message for life; that seek to realize for the Book, not alone a high plane of authority, but also that vital contact with affairs which is in itself a satisfactory demonstration of authority. It is not to be denied that the church, either through pressure of attack or through misconception of its task, has oftentimes seemed to depart a little from its greater work of vitalizing the Word of God for men. The defense of Scripture can never represent the larger work of the church. Its permanent and ever-present task in relation to the Book is to create and stimulate interest for it in the mind, to open free avenues of approach, to present its broad vistas and unfold its vital possibilities, to reveal its wondrous outlook upon life and eternity. It is a wise teacher or preacher who will learn to bend his energies in this direction. Scarcely any barrier is so great to the sway of personal religion as the presence of mechanical feelings about the Bible, the unconscious infidelity that consists in the lack of appreciation. It is a true Book, it is a good Book to have in one's possession, it is a Book to be regarded with feelings of greatest reverence, it is a Book that may be expected to work mysterious and sacred results by its very presence—yet to many it is not quite the Book of Life in the strong and vital meanings that belong to such a title. Beginning with the child and leading up through the stages of advancing youth to adult age, every effort should be put forth to create in the mind a sense of vital relationship to the Book.

It is of less importance to know the names of the Kings of Israel and Judah, or to know how many miracles were wrought by the Lord, than it is to have the right *feeling* about the Bible itself, a fresh and quickened conception of its appeal to the facts of life. Writing to the Thessalonian Christians the Apostle Paul said, "When ye received from us the word of the message, even the Word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the Word of God, which also *worketh in you* that believe" (I Thessa. ii:13).

It may be said at once that the ministry of the Word of God to men is a ministry of salvation. This is true, but it includes a great deal more than a positional effect, a change from one attitude before God to another. Salvation is a vital effect. It includes whatsoever the Saviour can do for a man's life, not merely to save it from law, but to emancipate it, to expand it, to endow it, to impel it, to pour light into it, to open its doors and windows, to quicken its sources—to save life and to save it in the richest, most Saviour-like way—"that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." What we need to obtain from the Bible is not alone its technical and structural parts, its system of truth. We must search until we find the vital effects that are there, the inexhaustible stimulus of life and character. "Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life" (John v:39). Abraham is as true to-day as he was nineteen centuries before the Christian era. We feel that we cannot be mistaken about David; there is a breath of life about his Psalms. Nothing we feel can shake

Enoch or Elijah or Isaiah or Samuel; these all have some vital effects to produce within us. In like manner, only more intensely and more deeply, we feel that he who said of himself, "I am the truth," has opened for us in his life and death a storehouse of vital energy that can never be exhausted.

"That Book is the noblest heirloom of humanity," says Principal Fairbairn. "To every man it belongs as an inalienable birthright. To its best truths, to its inmost heart, to its meaning for this and for all times, you have all an indefeasible right. The worst of frauds were the act of the man who should cheat you out of it."\* The Bible is a Book for the average man. It is neither too high nor too low. It runs the whole gamut of human experience. It is familiar with every possible phase of human nature. "The Bible," says Professor John E. McFadyen, of Knox College, "looks the facts of life in the face, and it tells the truth about them." Its message is not for the exceptional man, but for the average man, the man who toils and sins, rejoices and suffers, succeeds and fails, believes and doubts. No other book holds so delicate a balance among the things of life. It neither flies above the heads of men nor misses the mark by disingenuousness. It is sane with the sanity of experience: it is vital with the wisdom of life. If it were not for this quality of wisdom and poise among affairs, it could not be, as it is, the safe guide of millions in every generation. While it is true that many religious vagaries have arisen among believers of the Bible, it is still more true that the

\* *Religion in History and in Modern Life*, p. 103, by A. M. Fairbairn.

average man who accepts it as the guide of life becomes the inheritor of its solid strength and wisdom, its sanity and balance.

It is to be reckoned among the chief services of the Book to the world, though it is often left unnoticed, that it is able to impregnate the mind with its spirit, to reproduce its fineness of temper, and establish among men its own superior view-point for things both temporal and eternal. Matthew Arnold's "sweetness and light," or still better his "sweet reasonableness" (*ἐπιείκεια*), expresses something of the meaning. Frederick W. Robertson's "acquiescence in things as they are not incompatible with a cheerful resolve to make them better," which, says he, is "good for the mind," is a further hint in the direction intended. Nearer the mark are Mr. Ruskin's assertion that the Bible has become to him "strictly conclusive and protective in all his modes of thought," \* and the suggestion by a recent magazine writer † of the power of the Book to "impregnate the minds and quicken the speech of a whole race." Still another writer has summed up the influence of the Bible in a single sentence. "If wisely taught," he says, "it is able to make life sweet and clean and strong and fruitful." What is said by many writers of the "Hebraic fervor," and "the Puritan fibre"—qualities not entirely lost from modern life—is usually a recognition of the influence of the Book in establishing a certain norm or standard of life. Matthew Arnold speaks of the Puritan's "perpetual

\* See the well-known passage in his *Præterita*.

† Rollo Ogden, "The Literary Loss of the Bible," *Century Magazine*, February, 1903.

conversance with deep things and with the Bible."\* Writing of the influence of the Bible upon the New England Pilgrims, Charles Dudley Warner shows that it was for them "the literature of power." "It was an open door into the world where emotion is expressed, where imagination can range, where love and longing find a language, where imagery is given to every noble and suppressed passion of the soul, where every aspiration finds wings."† In his interesting and instructive volumes on *The Puritan in England, Holland, and America*, Douglas Campbell has referred in many places to the connection of the Bible with the leading traits of Puritan life. "Wherever we find them, either in England or America, we find in their possession the School-book and the Bible."‡

As a distributive factor among the individuals of society this penetrative quality of the Scripture is deeply impressive, while it is at the same time too fine and delicate as an influence to be easily estimated. Whether the Bible is read in the schools or not, it is always a factor in popular education. To have an intelligent knowledge of this one Book, in which the foundations of Anglo-Saxon civilization have been laid, is to have at least the beginnings of a liberal education. Its outlook is upon the whole area of time and of human life. It tends to develop the historic sense, without which education must have a feeble basis. It lays impressive emphasis upon individual forces, and illuminates for all time

\* *St. Paul and Protestantism*, pp. 21, 26.

† *Relation of Literature to Life*, p. 35.

‡ Vol. i, p. 458.

those qualities in the heart of man that contain the latent forces of the best civilization that Earth can know. Especially does it promote the cherishing of larger hopes, the practice of mental vision, and a constructive and enabling faith in Unseen Verities. Thus has the Book entered quietly, yet potently, into the inner realm of man's life. It has given unmistakable elevation to his thought. It has furnished a constant lift, like the pulling of a kite-string, to human affairs. Wherever it has been read, individuals in great numbers have learned to give their life a deeper tone of sincerity and worthiness. "Wherever it comes it enriches and ennobles human life, opens common sources of consolation and cheer, helps men to understand and respect one another, gives a loftier tone to philosophy, a deeper meaning to history, and a purer light to poetry."\* The most hopeful fact in the difficult and complex situation of modern life—the real ground of a reasonable optimism—is the fact that the minds of the people in whose hands humanly speaking are the destinies of the world to-day, are deeply impregnated with the thoughtfulness, the sense of responsibility, the vast and far-reaching energies of the Word of God.

A very obvious effect of the Book upon human life is seen in its relation to memory. From childhood to old age the Bible pleads to be remembered. Its sentences ring in the mind, and cling like thistles ofttimes to an unwilling memory. Its words follow us, as the eye of a well-made portrait follows one in a room, into every experience and locality of life. A

\* "Christianity and Literature," Henry van Dyke, D. D. Address at the Pan-Presbyterian Council, Liverpool, 1904.

man who has adopted ten great sentences of the Scripture, and has impregnated his thought with them, has something to live by. "The wages of sin is death!"—Who can forget this irresistible sentence? It rings out like the beating of hammers upon an anvil. "Let not your heart be troubled!" Who wishes to forget this sentence, speaking the language of the heart, and revealing the depth of an undiscovered sympathy in God? It has been said that the first consecutive sentence that most Scottish children learn is this: "The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want." It is almost a comment on Scotch history. It has been often remarked of persons who have taken pains, especially in early life, to memorize the language of Scripture, that they have at hand a ready-made philosophy of life that serves them on all occasions. To them the events of our life in the world seem neither new nor strange: they have been spoken of in this universal literature of life. Its words are often an *open sesame* to the closed places, a quick interpretation of things dark and hard. To have its language in mind is to have a purifying stream running through the region of our understanding: it is to have in hand a rubric of thought and feeling: it is to possess a whole arsenal of fact, incident, precept, and principle, for the battle of life. "Thy words have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee." There is a preservative and defensive quality about the language of Scripture that ought not to be underestimated in the study of methods. It should be among the first aims of the preacher and the teacher to install the words of the Book in the mind of the hearer. This in itself

is the beginning of a spiritual education. Give a man on the Sabbath a strong text of Scripture, set in the clear light of memory, and you have furnished him an inward voice of prophecy, a court of high appeal, a mode of reckoning for life's directions. The wonderful adaptability of the words of the Bible to the circumstances of life suggests the true method of approach. Their power of spontaneous application, at times their unescapable persistence and their mighty appeal to the soul, are the deeper elements that constitute the Bible a real literature of life and of power.\*

We have, therefore, no hesitation in urging the great value of the habit of memorizing passages of the Scripture, and this despite the fact that many educators in late years have decried the habit of memorizing as a pedagogical method. As a mere mechanical, dry-as-dust procedure, it may indeed be very unfruitful. But as a process of familiarizing the mind with the splendid periods of the Book, of fastening upon the soul the spell of its fascination for all time, of producing a feeling of intimacy and ownership, and of storing the mind with ready-at-hand material for the culture of life—it is a method that is fraught with the largest possibilities. A cogent reason emerges at this point for keeping the Bible in the schools, that cannot be suspected of any sectarian bias. It was this power for the culture of

\* The custom of printing a well-chosen text of Scripture on a white card for distribution on the first Sabbath of the year as a Year Text is suggested as a simple method of bringing the Word into contact with affairs. A single verse of Scripture thus flashing its message before the world often has a greater imperative than many sermons.

life that led Thomas Huxley to take his stand among those who claim a place for the Bible in education. As "the only great literature within the reach of the common people," he conceived that it might lay the foundation of morals, create an appetite by the virility of its language and thought for things great and strong and good, and build within the soul by slow degrees a kingdom of righteousness which could not be overthrown. There is no surer way of giving to the children of the Nation "in simple the very essence of a priceless heritage" than by establishing a memory-contact with the great words and sentences of the Book. Mr. Ruskin's testimony at this point is undeniably impressive, in view of his noble service to the world as an author characterized no less by refined diction than by lofty thought. "I have next," he says, "with deeper gratitude to chronicle what I owed to my mother for the resolutely consistent lessons which so exercised me in the Scriptures as to make every word of them familiar to my ear in habitual music—yet in that familiarity reverenced, as transcending all thought, and ordaining all conduct." In a recent study of "Memory Work in Character-Forming," \* Dr. Walter L. Hervey finds a psychological basis for such work in the three laws of adaptation, habituation, and assimilation. The variety and scope of the Scripture furnish abundant material for the operation of the first of these laws; the brevity, facility, and rhythm of its language easily fall in with the second of these laws; and as for the third law—the law of assimilation—it may

\* Address before the Religious Education Association, 1904. *Proceedings of the Second Convention*, p. 31.

be said that no seed-plot of Nature is so fertile as a young mind; speaking within limits it requires but the wise hand and loving heart of the gardener to make it blossom like the rose.

With our present understanding of the value of memory processes in relation to character—that “in former days there was excess of memorizing and deficiency of judgment,” but that “the danger now is that there will be an excess of judgment and deficiency of word-for-word memorizing, and that the practice of learning word-for-word that which should be so learned will fall into disuse”—the time is ripe for a serious proposal to re-institute the habit of memorizing the Scripture as a wise method in religious education, safeguarding it of course by clear conceptions both of its possibilities and its limitations. It is not unreasonable to suggest that Memory Courses in Bible passages could readily be prepared which, wisely adapted to the age of the pupil, might become a constructive force in religious education. Mr. Ruskin’s famous list of chapters already referred to in this volume,† is a classic example. Dr. Hervey suggests ‡ as a criterion “that which, by its truth, its beauty, and its living power, most universally and permanently satisfies the soul.” He proposes the following choice and classification of Memory passages: 1. The sweet and majestic words of Jesus. 2. The sublime and often mystical poetry found in Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Revelation. 3. Ancient and beautiful forms of prayer. 4.

\* Address by Dr. Walter L. Hervey.

† See p. 31.

‡ Address by Dr. Walter L. Hervey. Religious Education Association.

Classic forms of sound words embodying edifying doctrine. To this list should be added those phrases and sentences of Scripture which contain brief and compact statements of the wisdom of life (*e. g.*, The Book of Proverbs), the value of spirituality, the presence of God, the love of mankind, the imperative of duty—in short, whatsoever will fill the quiver of the mind with arrows for life's battle.\* The author will be pardoned for referring to a plan for promot-

\* A little volume has just been issued (1905) entitled *Memo-  
rable Passages from the Bible*, selected and edited by Fred  
Newton Scott, Professor of Rhetoric in the University of Michigan.  
The selection is made on literary grounds. Professor Scott's  
words in the Preface are worth noting. "Time was when such  
a volume as this would have been superfluous. A few genera-  
tions ago it would have competed in the school and the home  
with the Bible itself. When the Bible was read regularly twice  
a day in the home and at least once a day in the schools, there  
was small need of making volumes of extracts from it. The  
biblical phrases then formed indispensable parts of the living  
stream of expression, both written and oral. But that day has  
gone by, and seems not likely to return. It is the simple truth,  
obvious to any one who uses his eyes and ears, that our young  
people, in the mass, do not come into close and frequent contact  
with the Bible commonplaces: or if they do, that they are little im-  
pressed by them. . . . In a generation or two it seems not unlikely  
that many of the great biblical passages, now the treasured  
idioms of the language, will undergo a rapid obsolescence." Professor  
Scott has selected "what may be called Bible idioms—  
those sentences and bits of connected discourse which have be-  
come an essential part of our literary tradition," such parts of  
Scripture, he says, "which I could wish I had myself committed  
to memory when I was young." We have, however, urged above  
something more than the literary value of memorizing the Scrip-  
ture (valuable as this is)—the installation of the mind with the  
words of Scripture in order to the control of thought and the  
command of life itself.

ing the memorizing of Scripture which is in vogue in his own congregation.\* It is a voluntary organization called *The Memorizers' League*, without constitution or by-laws, without pledge or fees, whose members cultivate the habit of memorizing at least one verse of the Scripture each day. More than might be expected this League, doing its work without extra meetings and without statistics, is a quiet source of quickened interest among many. As one of the minor methods of bringing the Book into the midst of affairs it is heartily commended to pastors and teachers, as well as to parents in their homes. A Memorizers' League in the home, including the father and mother and children, with a weekly review on Sabbath afternoons, suggests a force in religious education that would operate like gravitation, quietly but irresistibly.

Literature is one measure of the relation of the Bible to affairs. The most serious and the most efficient of our writers are constant purveyors of biblical incident and teaching. How close the Book is to life, and how strong is its fascination for men in the ordinary round of thought, is proved by the fact that few important lessons of life are brought to us on the pages of literature without some light of the Scripture. It is the writer, as much as the preacher, who discovers in modern life the "human analogue" to the great persons and incidents of the Bible. Certain great books like *The Scarlet Letter* have done more than ten thousand sermons to carry the teaching of the Bible into the arena of life. Henry van Dyke says, "I find the same truth to life in *King*

\* The First Presbyterian Church, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

*Lear* as in the drama of *Job*, and the same sublime, patient faith, though the one ends happily and the other sadly. The Book of Ruth is no more and no less Christian, to my mind, than Tennyson's *Dora*. There is the same religion in *The Heart of Midlothian* as in the Book of Esther. The parable of the rich man lives again in *Romola*. In *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* St. Paul's text, 'The flesh lusteth against the spirit,' is burned deep into the heart. No great writer represents the whole of Christianity in its application to life. But I think that almost every great writer, since the religion of Jesus touched the leading races, has helped to reveal some new aspect of its beauty, to make clear some new secret of its sweet reasonableness, or to enforce some new lesson of its power. I read in Shakespeare the majesty of the moral law, in Victor Hugo the sacredness of childhood, in Goethe the glory of renunciation, in Wordsworth the joy of humility, in Tennyson the triumph of immortal love, in Browning the courage of faith in God, in Thackeray the ugliness of hypocrisy and the beauty of forgiveness, in George Eliot the supremacy of duty, in Dickens the divinity of kindness, and in Ruskin the dignity of service. Irving teaches me the lesson of simple-hearted cheerfulness, Hawthorne shows me the hatefulness of sin and the power of penitence, Longfellow gives me the soft music of tranquil hope and earnest endeavor, Lowell makes me feel that we must give ourselves to our fellowmen if we would bless them, and Whittier sings to me of human brotherhood and Divine Fatherhood. Are not these Christian lessons?"

Surely "their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."

The influence of the Bible in social and political affairs reaches almost to a "categorical imperative." Wherever it has been in the least illuminated by Christian thought Society must constantly reckon with those great ideals of human conduct which are set up in the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount, as well as in many other conclusive and summary sentences, whether from a prophet, as—"What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God;" or from an apostle, as—"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ," or from the Master himself, as—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Every departure from these precepts in social affairs is a return to darkness, and is sure to result in the rise of individuals and companies of individuals who sound the summons back to Moses and back to Christ. The most amazing and convincing thing in Christian civilization to-day, despite the frequent decline in morals and in spirituality, is the persistence and the recrudescence of the biblical ideal of life. The Bible is the true arbiter in affairs. It cannot be eliminated either from counting-houses, or from courts of justice, or from courts of international inquiry. Principal Fairbairn in an address to workingmen affirms that "no literature of antiquity is possessed with so deep a love of the poor, speaks so strong and generous words concerning them, surrounds them with so much dignity

and so many rights as the Old Testament." It denounces the King who dares to oppress; it praises the man who does justice and loves mercy. It defends the weak and the defenceless and honors and guards the woman and the child. "It hates the 'false balance,' the lying tongue, the over-reaching spirit. It commends alike the generous master and the faithful servant. In a word, its ideal of life—industrial, domestic, civil, commercial—is the highest, purest, sublimest, known to the ancient world, for it is an ideal that struggles towards the creation of righteousness in all persons and in all relations." Dr. Jowett held that the best way to teach ethics is by biography. In the Bible there is not only ethical precept, but ethical example—the far-away but far-reaching name of Enoch "who walked with God"; the preponderant influence of Abraham the Friend of God, "who believed and it was counted unto him for righteousness"; the never-ending example of Moses, who "endured as seeing Him who is invisible"; the stimulating lives of Joshua and Caleb and David and Isaiah and Josiah and Daniel and Ezra and Nehemiah—no more can these protagonists of faith, love, and duty be dismissed from their grasp of the creative imagination of men—the imagination that creates ideals, standards, and rules of conduct—than the colors of the rainbow can be untwisted in the sky. They are part of the social force of religion; they rule by the potency of example, by the contagion of influence. It is a far cry from Israel and Judah in the eighth century before Christ to England and America in the twentieth century after Christ; nevertheless the

national messages of Amos and Hosea and Micah contain the perpetual rebuke from Jehovah of every species of materialism, every form of injustice, every tendency towards despiritualized standards of life that beset any modern nation.

The influence of the Bible upon human affairs may in short be described as an effect of pervasive hopefulness and strength, of intensified vision and broadened outlook, of what Benjamin Kidd has called "projected efficiency," \* a grasp of the future that contains the potency of faith. Its power is not measured alone by the outward adoption of its precepts: it has given an uplift to life in general, has set up ideals of life that will forever enamour the sensitive heart, and has driven the mighty hope of salvation so deeply into human thought as to constitute a perpetual enmity to doubt and despair. The poet Tennyson voiced the thought of the pervasive influence of the Scripture, when he wrote:

"Save for my daily range  
Among the pleasant fields of Holy Writ,  
I might despair."

The Book keeps the youth of the world alive. It gives to human thought a tone of vital freshness and power, preventing spiritual decrepitude and decay. Cato studying Greek at eighty felt that he was still in the enjoyment of youth; still more the Bible brings men in contact with the "power of an endless life." We are indebted to the Psalmist (i: 2, 3) for a beautiful description of the preservative and rejuvenating power of the Word. He whose "delight is in

\**The Principles of Western Civilization*, chapter ii.

the law of the Lord . . . shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." It is by the Word that men arm themselves with a philosophy whose foundation thought is Trust, adjust themselves thereby to the changes of life, learn to meet its emergencies, and endure its sufferings; obtain an outlook upon Time and an insight into Eternity that are bound to bear fruit in character; and fit themselves meantime for the most efficient living now and hereafter. What is true of an individual is true of the church. The church must live and work in the pages of the Holy Scripture. If the church grow careless of the Word or lose its inspiring fascination, its heart will grow cold and its courage will wane. The constant power of readjustment, the ability to meet emergencies and crises of growth and doubt and sin, which the church must possess, are only possible through the rejuvenating processes of prayer and Bible-reading. Let the church decline in the practice of these arts, and the weakness of age will seize upon it, drying up its fountains of life, and stemming the ready flow of love. There are those who tell us that what the church needs more than anything else is that it fit itself better to meet the questions and problems of the day. There is no better way to do this than to seek first a revival of Bible-reading. Mr. Moody said that he never knew a useful Christian who was not a Bible reader. The church is never fitted for any new task until it goes back to the Word and comes forth again clothed in power. It was not Luther

alone who made the Reformation possible: it was the vernacular editions of the Bible that were being read all over Europe that opened the heart of Christendom and gave a new impulse to the spiritual life of the world.

There is no better example in the entire Scripture of the relation of the Bible to affairs than the Book of Psalms. "For thousands of years," says Principal Fairbairn, "these Psalms have been sung, and men sing them still, feeling as if they were the most modern, the most living of all religious songs. They have been translated out of their primitive speech into almost all our human tongues, and have become, as it were, the universal language in which man can tell his joy or sorrow, his contrition or exultation, to God."\* It is related of Wellhausen the biblical critic that a friend found him wiping his eyes at his lecture-room door and inquired the cause. "I can never go over the fifty-first Psalm," he replied, "without being so touched that I can hardly conceal it from the class." How modern these writings are. The print is still wet upon the pages that record these outbreathings of human thought and feeling. They drop a plummet straight into the depths of human life. What problem of faith, what perplexity of endeavor, what sharp corner in human relations are they not aware of? In every emergency of affairs the language of the Psalms has been the natural vehicle of expression. "There is scarcely a leaf in the Psalter which is not stained by some withered flower of the past." The great sentences of this Book of the soul's inner life and longing have

\* *Religion in History and in Modern Life*, p. 134.

gone with men to the battle-field and to the prison; they have been the solace and stay of men when they were tried and perplexed; they have illuminated the pathway of many when it has led down into the "valley of the shadow"; they have cheered the despondent, spurred anew the spirits of the doubting, enlivened hearts that were drooping, and fanned anew the flame of immortality when it burned low in the human breast; and they have sounded a perpetual note of rejoicing before the Lord that is to this day the music of the sons and daughters of men in all the earth. If men shall ever come to the time when the Psalms no longer minister to their life, and no longer arbitrate in their affairs, they will have come to the time also when they are ready to "lead God to the edge of the Universe" and bow him respectfully out of human life.\*

\* A book has been recently published (1905) which contains a very remarkable study, from the historical standpoint, of the value of the Psalms in affairs. It is entitled *The Psalms in Human Life*, by Rowland E. Prothero. In a volume of 368 pages the author shows how the Psalms have permeated human thought and figured in the crises of life. "The Book of Psalms," he says, "contains the whole music of the heart of man, swept by the hand of his Maker. In it are gathered the lyrical burst of his tenderness, the moan of his penitence, the pathos of his sorrow, the triumph of his victory, the despair of his defeat, the firmness of his confidence, the rapture of his assured hope. In it is presented the anatomy of all parts of the human soul: in it, as Heine says, are collected 'sunrise and sunset, birth and death, promise and fulfilment—the whole drama of humanity'" (p. 1).

## XI

### FOUR PICTURES OF JESUS \*

PROFESSOR AUSTIN PHELPS wrote—"As I look back over my ministry, I realize that I preached so little about Christ." Few who have read the pages of this devout Christian minister and teacher would give consent to his lament. Nevertheless it is a striking testimony to the central value of the Person and Work of Christ in the preaching of the Gospel. Doubtless it will be an occasion for wonder, when we shall have gone on to share his glory, that we were not chiefly concerned in life with knowing and declaring the beauty of Immanuel.

The preëminent purpose of the Holy Scripture is to tell the story of redemption, and to set before the world the picture of the Redeemer. If this purpose seems at times to be obscured, as, for example, in the details of history in the Old Testament, it is in reality no more lost sight of than the purpose to build a bridge is lost sight of in the laying of the foundation under water. From the Protevangelium † onward the figure of the world's Saviour

\* Among many books devoted to the comparative study of the Gospels special reference is made to the following as being very helpful: *Why Four Gospels?* by D. S. Gregory, D. D. *The Fourfold Story*, by George F. Genung. *The Characteristic Differences of the Four Gospels*, by Andrew Jukes.

† Genesis iii : 15.

is constantly moving out into the light of Revelation. It was the Old Testament Scripture of which he spake when he said, "They are they which testify of me." A lady relates an experience of her childhood. In the home there hung a mysterious picture of a tree. She had been told that something beside a tree could be seen in the picture; but she could not discover it. Suddenly one day she saw what she had been looking for—it was the face of Napoleon. Ever afterwards when she looked at the picture, she saw not the tree at all—only the face. One who knows the Book cannot but see the Face.

It is profoundly and sacredly true that the ultimate interpretation of the Book is found in the Person of Jesus Christ. It is equally true that its supreme fascination centres in the Son of Man. In the Old Testament one seems to be like a traveller in the deep woods. The shadows often lie dark upon the ground. At times the sky itself is lost. Yet there are many signs and markings that point in one direction. Many pathways run in and out where other feet have trod, and there is one *clear way* that seems to break irresistibly through all the tangle of the woods toward the light of day. Little by little the signs increase. The traveller's hope beats high. Something akin to spiritual excitement possesses him. The awe of an approaching event creeps upon him. Suddenly the way breaks out into an open space and the traveller is flooded by a great light. This is a faint description of the approach of a sensitive heart, through the types and prophecies and promises of the Old Testament, to the Christ of the New Testament. What joy of discovery! What

reward to the heart's deep desire! What an open vista in the darkness of life!

No book the world has ever known has left so deep an impression upon men as the New Testament; no book has so charmed the heart of mankind. Canon Farrar thought that if all the books in the world were about to be ablaze in a great fire he would wish to snatch the Bible away first of all. The world could ill afford to lose the picture of Jesus Christ.\* An incident is related of a visit which Dean Stanley paid to the German student Ewald. They were seated together in the latter's study; a Greek Testament lay on the table before them. Suddenly, as they talked, Ewald caught the Testament impulsively from the table and exclaimed, "This little Book contains all the wisdom of the world." And this is true, not on account of its racial significance, not on account of the beauty of its rhetoric, not on account of its outlook upon life, but pre-eminently because it contains the picture of the Person of Jesus Christ, and the story of his earthly work. No figures can compute the value of the four Gospels as a literary vehicle for the life of Christ.

\* "Jesus Christ is the most powerful spiritual force that ever operated for good on and in humanity. He is to-day what he has been for centuries—an object of reverence and love to the good, the cause of remorse and change, penitence and hope to the bad; of moral strength to the morally weak, of inspiration to the despondent, consolation to the desolate, and cheer to the dying. He has created the typical virtues and moral ambitions of civilized man; has been to the benevolent a motive to beneficence, to the selfish a persuasion to self-forgetful obedience; and has become the living ideal that has steadied and raised, awed and guided youth, braced and ennobled manhood, mellowed and beautified age."—A. M. Fairbairn, *Studies in the Life of Christ*, p. 1.

Now it is to be observed that the Gospels represent the most fascinating form of biography. It may be described as pictorial. That is, it is biography which presents the life in such a light as to make the subject realizable to the mind. The company of Greeks who came to Philip with the request—"Sir, we would see Jesus"—put in words both the purpose of the Incarnation and the desire which is at once awakened in the heart that has heard of him. God sent his Son into the world that the world might see him and know him. When the story of his life and death came to be written this same need must be remembered—to help men to see Jesus. John, the Apostle, described his Gospel in this language—"These are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." How well this end has been attained in the Gospels all attentive readers can testify. Nothing in the entire range of the literature of biography is so attractive as the four-fold story of Jesus, nor has any biography been read with such avidity. Studied in the light of those qualities which constitute real biography, it must be pronounced a magnificent success. The Gospels bring Jesus near to us. He is more than the mysterious Person who lived on the earth nineteen hundred years ago; he is the Christ of To-day, as well as the Christ of Yesterday. We follow with chastened imagination the vivid portrayal of his life. We witness not alone the climacteric effect of the great events and discourses of his life, but also the filling in of the picture with minor incidents and words. We see him in familiar social intercourse with his family of disciples. We hear his every-day

talk. We witness the every-day incidents of his life. We see him not alone, after the manner of some biographers, in lofty transports of thought and action, but more often we see him doing ordinary things, taking a boat on the Lake, entering into a house, breaking bread at table, resting by a well-side, or taking little children up in his arms. The characteristic of the Gospels as biography is that we see Jesus *engaged in the actual incidents of his earthly Messiahship*. The effect produced is that of verisimilitude. Literary doubt is more difficult in relation to the Gospels than in relation to any other part of the Scripture. It is conceivable that the story of Jesus might have been told in other forms. It might for instance have been told in the form of interpretative biography. It would then have been characterized largely by author's comment, by explanation and definition. It would have lost immeasurably, however, in the qualities which vivify biographical narrative, and produce a sense of acquaintance. We know of nothing in the structure of the Book that so clearly justifies the demand for divine superintendence as the peculiar adaptiveness of the Gospels.

Among the notable qualities of the Gospels none are more interesting than the variety which is plainly discernible. Each of the four Gospels presents the picture of the same Divine Person; but there is very marked unlikeness even in the prevailing sense of likeness in these several narratives. This indeed reveals at once a valid reason why there should be more than one story of Jesus. Two Gospels reveal better than one could do the fulness of Christ's person; and four better than two. If we

add to this the fact that each assumes a different point of view from the others, we mark an additional advantage. In short, it is the advantage of comparison. A familiar illustration may be found in the art of picture-making. When the sculptor wished to make a statue of Charles I., Vandyke, the artist, made not one, but three portraits of the King, in order that the sculptor might see his subject from more than one point of view. Modern photography has made excellent use of the Law of Comparison in the development of the art. A skilful artist will often set the same face side by side on the same card, a profile, a half-front, a full view, the purpose being to give an ampler understanding of the person represented.

Without undertaking to discuss the Gospels in detail, it is our purpose here to suggest the point of view of each of them, and to show how the effect of the four Gospels is cumulative and complete. To this end titles are chosen for the four Gospels which, however fanciful they may seem to some, may nevertheless assist in a clear understanding of what each of these fascinating narratives undertakes to do, in comparison with the others.

The Gospel according to Matthew we shall describe as

*The Profile Picture.*

The characteristic of a profile is a clear-cut outline against a background. There are some faces that exhibit their greatest strength in a side-view. A profile picture of Mr. Gladstone appeared a few

years before his death which left a very strong impression upon the beholder. Looking at such a picture, the mind has a feeling that something more is behind it. The background is as much a part of the impressionistic effect as the face itself. Residents of the Eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains almost universally prefer the view of the mountains at sunset, because at such a time the profile of the range is clear cut against the sky. The best example of a mountain profile, however, is found in the "Old Man of the Mountain" in the White Mountains. All who have seen this wonderful stone face cut out of the mountain side by the deft hand of nature can appreciate better than before the artistic values of the profile and its background. One has a feeling that time itself and the whole range of Creation must be behind the Stone Face. The appreciation of a background is, to be sure, partly a mental process; but it is none the less a true effect for purposes both of art and of fact.

Now the title suggested for Matthew's Gospel—*The Profile Picture*—brings out the distinctive purpose of the first Gospel. It is to present the Person of Jesus Christ to the world against the sky of the Past—to make his face stand out so clearly against the background of Promise, Prophecy, Type, and Symbol, that men may recognize in him the fulfilment of the Voice of the Past in the actuality of the Present. It was the Jew who could appreciate this method of the historian more than other men. It was he who was made the inheritor of the Past. To him had been given the Law and the Prophets and the Ordinances. In his mind—the mind of his race

—had been created a definite expectation of a Coming One. At length in the fulness of time, the Promised One had really come—the Messiah of the Jews, the Saviour of the World. In telling the story of his life and ministry and death in the world it is first of all important that all men—especially the Jew—should see him as the Promised One. Now this is exactly the effect of Matthew's Gospel upon an attentive mind—the face of the Messiah, as Matthew paints the picture, has the distinctness of a Profile. It was designed that the Jew looking at this picture should look past the picture to the background of Old Testament promise and prophecy, and be led to exclaim—"Surely this is the Messiah-King whom we have long expected." In Matthew's Gospel, speaking in artistic terms, we have, more than in any other of the four narratives, the effect of background, that is, the emergence of the Past into the Present, the fulfilment of Promise in Fact. This is the Key to the first Gospel. Matthew's design was to make the Picture of Jesus stand out in front of the Old Testament as a background, so that the Jew would recognize his Messiah and believe.

A few particulars of the structure and method of the Gospel will serve to emphasize its point of view.

It should be noted in general that Matthew's Gospel breathes the spirit of the Old Testament. It may have been written later than the others: nevertheless it is properly placed first in the New Testament, because it is closest to the Old Testament in its tone. Here the life of Christ is presented in the light of the Old Testament—or more expressly, in terms of the Old Testament. Over sixty direct quo-

tations are given from Old Testament books, and nearly thirty references. The phrases "Kingdom of God," and "Kingdom of Heaven," are found half a hundred times, and the phrase "Son of David," occurs seven times. There is moreover one expression that seems to serve almost as a *formula* for Matthew. It is the oft-recurring statement, "That it might be fulfilled," or its equivalent, "It is written." These expressions are found, for example, twelve times in the first four chapters. He gives the narrative of the birth of Jesus, and then adds, "that it might be fulfilled." He tells of Herod's search for the child in Bethlehem, and says, "for thus it is written by the prophet." He recounts the flight into Egypt, and appends the same formula, "that it might be fulfilled." He describes the return to Nazareth, and makes again the same comment, "that it might be fulfilled." It is very plain that this author hopes to make it appear that in Christ men can find the fulfilment of that which was written aforetime. In short, this is to be regarded as his point of view.

The framework of the Gospel still further conveys this idea. Part I is introductory, extending to chapter iv:16. The Gospel opens with a family history or genealogy, which is introduced in this manner, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham" (i:1). This is the same as saying, that the author claims for Jesus that he is the true fulfilment of the divine promise of perpetual royalty made in David, and the divine Covenant of universal blessing made in Abraham—"The Son of David, the Son of Abraham." It is as if he had said upon the threshold of

the story—"Here is your Promised One." Then follow in order the narratives of the Birth, the Flight into Egypt, the Residence in Nazareth (chapters i and ii), the Ministry of the appointed Herald with the Baptism of Jesus (chapter iii), and the scene of the Temptation or the girding of the Messiah for his work (chapter iv). Each of these incidents receives, as we have seen, an Old Testament setting.

Parts II and III are indicated by the same expression, "From that time began Jesus," suggesting a division of his ministry. Part II (iv:17 to xvi:20) contains the record of his *Proclamation of the Kingdom*. "From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (iv: 17). He calls disciples about him and begins his work in Galilee (chapter iv, latter part). Next he announces the principles of the Kingdom that he represents in the Sermon on the Mount, the first of the five discourses in Matthew (chapters v, vi, and vii). A group of miracles follows, as credentials of his ministry (chapters viii and ix). Then the Apostles are sent forth with instructions for their work—the second discourse (chapter x). John the Baptist's questions are answered, Pharisaic objections are met, and the multitudes start a popular cry, "Is this the Son of David?" (chapters xi and xii). Seven Parables descriptive of the Kingdom follow—the third discourse (chapter xiii). The death of John the Baptist and the record of several deeds of power are next in order (chapters xiv and xv). Then, as if Jesus would sum up the effect of what had been done, and take an account with his

followers, he calls forth from them a great confession by the mouth of Peter—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." On the basis of such a faith, said Jesus—"I will build my Church." In all this the picture of the Messiah grows. This is the first stage of his ministry, the first part of the picture. He is heard proclaiming the Kingdom and is seen working the mighty works thereof.

Part III opens with this statement—"From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer" (xvi: 21). *Preparing for the Cross*—is the title suggested for this part. The final stage of Christ's ministry is presented: the other side of prophecy is fulfilled: the Man of Sorrows is seen. Frequent announcement is made of his approaching passion, and opposition increases. There are two climaxes in this period. The Transfiguration (chapter xvii) and the Triumphal Entry (chapter xxi). Two more discourses are given, the fourth and the fifth—the object of the Church (chapter xviii) and the Last Things (chapters xxiv and xxv). Rapidly the Messiah hastens on to the Cross. Above his Cross they put an inscription—"This is Jesus the King of the Jews." His parting message to his disciples was a definite claim of the Messiahship—"All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth."

Thus the whole effect of Matthew's Gospel is to present the picture of the Messiah-King to the Jew and to the world at large—the Messiah of promise and prophecy, the Messiah proclaiming his Kingdom, instructing men in spiritual parables and convincing them by his mighty works; the Messiah also as the

Man of Sorrows, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.

The second picture of Jesus, that of the Gospel according to Mark, may be spoken of illustratively as

*The Steel Engraving.*

There are not more than twenty-five verses in Mark's Gospel that are not found in Matthew and Luke: yet it differs very plainly in tone and method from each of the other Gospels.

The characteristic thing about a steel engraving is the impression of clearness, openness, and strength. It may lack somewhat in warmth, but it gains perceptibly in precision, directness, and force. Something like this is the distinct effect produced by the second Gospel. It is marked by extraordinary clearness, and especially by the power of action. This can best be brought out by referring at once to the characteristic word of the Gospel. Many writers and speakers have some word or words that being often used stand for their type of mind, a sort of mental norm or rubric. Cæsar's *Commentaries on the Gallic War* make constant use of the word *celeriter*, and the word itself is typical, not only of the brisk campaigns therein described, but also of the man himself. Now Mark has such a word—*straightway*.\* It is used over forty times in his Gos-

\* The Greek word *εὐθέως* (*εὐθύς*) is translated variously in the Authorized Version, "immediately," "forthwith," "straightway," "anon." The Revised Version renders it uniformly "straightway."

pel. Everything is done straightway. In the first five chapters the word appears twenty times. Let the reader study the first chapter and observe the use of the word. "Straightway coming up out of the water," "Straightway the Spirit driveth him," "Straightway they left the nets," "Straightway the leprosy departed." The frequent use of this striking word cannot be accidental. It expresses the writer's type of mind, and still more, his conception of the gospel.

Not this word alone, but the whole atmosphere, style, and structure of the second Gospel produce an impression of movement, immediacy, and power. "The style is the man," said Buffon. There is a certain impetuosity about Mark's style and method that cannot escape notice. He is given to abbreviation. He seems to be making a series of rapid sketches. He draws his picture with a bold hand, giving special prominence to incident and action. Notice, for example, how different his beginning is from that of Matthew. The first Gospel opens with a lengthy genealogy. Not so Mark's Gospel. The first sentence claims everything, goes to the very heart of the gospel. "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." No genealogies, few references to the past, few quotations from the Old Testament, very little preparatory matter. After this sudden and strange announcement the writer plunges at once *in medias res*. A half dozen verses suffice to tell of the ministry of John the Baptist. Three verses describe the baptism of Jesus, and two more depict his temptation, stopping long enough to say what the others omit, that "he was with the wild

beasts." Then Jesus begins his work in Galilee (vs. 14). Only thirteen verses, and we are face to face with Jesus Christ doing his work in the world. The first chapter is the *Busy Chapter*. It contains seven things—the ministry of the Baptist, the Baptism of Jesus, the Temptation, the opening of Christ's ministry, the calling of disciples, three important miracles, and mention of others, the Lord's morning devotions and many seeking him. How rapidly this artist sketches. Events are closely crowded together. There is movement and force in the very manner of the narrative. The tone of it is *straightway*. Dispensing with introductions and explanations, he leads us boldly into the presence of the Son of Man. And this is true of the entire Gospel. Formal statement is less thought of; conversation and teaching are less prominent; the Past is seldom dwelt upon; words are less important than deeds. All is movement, force, incident, action, the Present—in short, *the impression of power*. As if this artist had said to himself, "I will show the world what a wonderful Person my Master is, how truly he is entitled to the mastery of the world."

This impression of rapid movement and conquest is intensified by noticing the outline of Mark's Gospel. A few verses (1-13) contain a brief introduction (Part I). Then Part II tells the story of his three circuits in Galilee (i:14-ix): next, Part III describes his Final Journey to Jerusalem (x-xv): and Part IV is devoted to the Resurrection (xvi). It is the rapid story of a victorious campaign—a *Forward March* of the Son of Man from his baptism to the Cross and the Open Tomb. The scenes and

incidents described in this Gospel are often very luminous and vivid—the young man *running and kneeling* to Jesus—the storm on Galilee, the waves beating up and the boat on the point of filling—the cure of the deaf and dumb man, Jesus putting his fingers into his ears, and the very word that he used, *Ephphatha*—the raising of the Daughter of Jairus with his *Talitha cumi*—these and many other scenes show the same attention to details that marks the activity of the Son of Man.

The active, competent, serviceable Messiah, the Son of Man as the Doer, even more than the Teacher—this is Mark's point of view. In short, it is a picture of *The Worker*. In contrast with Matthew's numerous parables and discourses, Mark has but four parables, no lengthy discourses, no Sermon on the Mount; but he records eighteen miracles! In quick succession he leads us from one mighty work to another through the tireless ministry of Jesus, producing throughout a feeling of majestic movement and control, the mastery of divine workmanship amidst the affairs and needs of men. He is presented less as the Arrayed One (Matthew) and more as the Girded One—girded for service, for mastery and power.

In drawing his picture of Jesus, Mark appears to have had the Roman in mind, the typical man of the world, the man of power. It is the Saviour of the world whom he presents, and the Saviour, not dwelling apart, but working among men. This indeed is his closing message. When the disciples went forth, they preached everywhere, "*The Lord working with them.*" Inasmuch as all of us have something of the

Roman in us, the love of power, the admiration of strength and victory, Mark's picture of Jesus as the Mighty Worker makes a universal appeal.

*The Half-Tone Picture.*

Since the year 1870 the method of photo-engraving has come into extensive use in place of the old method of engraving with tools. The commonest process of photo-engraving is known as the "half-tone" process. This consists in placing a screen of netting or a ruled glass before the object or picture to be photo-engraved. The light streams through the network of lines and produces a plate characterized by a certain softness and beauty of finish. The very fact that the light is interrupted by the screen appears to result in a somewhat softened image, with less sharpness of detail, but with wonderful delicacy and fineness of impression. The splendid results obtained in recent years in the art of illustration for papers and magazines, are very largely due to the "half-tone" process.

This may serve, however imperfectly, to express the main characteristic of the Gospel according to Luke. It is the Half-Tone Picture of Jesus. In Luke's Gospel the divinity of Jesus is shaded and toned, and at the same time beautified by his rare humanity. Here we see not so much the Promised Messiah, as in Matthew, or the powerful, supernatural Worker, as in Mark, as the beautiful Man Jesus, the supreme product of the race, the noble Teacher, the Friend and Helper of mankind. Not that Luke is ever careless of the divinity of Jesus,

but he shows the Divine Light shining through a Perfect Humanity. It is not less the light of the true Son of God, yet his light is moderated and at the same time interpreted by his human life. In this Gospel he is more than elsewhere the Son of Man. In short Luke more than the others presents Divinity humanized. It is the Gospel of the Humanity of Jesus. If Matthew seems to bring Christ out of the Past as the gift of history and prophecy; if Mark seems to show him in the midst of life as the Strong Toiler; Luke more than either of these brings him close to us as our Friend and Elder Brother, the Intimate of our needs, the Helper of our troubles, the Physician for the hurt of sin.

The first evidence that this is the Gospel of the Humanity of Jesus is found in the genealogy (chapter iii). Matthew shows the descent of Jesus from David and Abraham. Luke proceeds backward in his genealogy and never stops until he has reached the beginning—"the Son of Seth, the Son of Adam, the Son of God." This is the assertion of the true humanity of Christ. He is truly incorporated with our human life; his humanity is true and universal. He is the "ideal, representative, pattern man," belonging, not to one age or nation, but to all—truly the Son of Man! Truly the Son of God! And this Divine Man is the World's Saviour! Himself a Greek, Luke is making his portrait of Jesus mainly for the Greek mind. He whose racial idea was the perfection of Humanity, whose Apollos and Venuses embodied the highest conceptions of human beauty, whose very gods were made in human form, must be led to see that Jesus is the chief among ten thousand,

the One altogether lovely, that he is the Sanctifier and Saviour of our broken humanity, that he is a Man come among men, to illuminate them by his Superior Presence, and to draw them by his sacrificial love unto God.

Luke's picture abounds in the winning traits of humanity. Two whole chapters at the beginning are devoted to the scenes connected with the birth of Jesus, the annunciations, the trembling expectation of Elizabeth and Mary, the heart-songs of those who looked for Redemption, the homely manger-scenes and the shepherds with their flock, the temple presentation, and later the scene among the doctors —this whole unfolding drama is so deeply fraught with human feeling and interest that men to this day regard it as the most fascinating *document of humanity* in existence. At the centre of the scene is that which is the chief interest and inspiration of human thought—a *child*. “She brought forth her first-born son,” “The Babe lying in a manger,” “His father and his mother were marvelling,” “And the child grew and waxed strong,” “Sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions,” “Came to Nazareth and was subject unto them,” “Advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” Such sentences as these are built out of the profoundest, yet the simplest, language that humanity knows. Every page of this Gospel, which Renan characterizes as “the most beautiful book in the world,” contains some hint of the pure humanity of Jesus. We are told that he rejoiced in spirit, that he wept over the city, that he kneeled down in prayer, that he was moved with

compassion, that he sweat drops of blood, that he prayed for his crucifiers. His human dependence upon God is frankly described. At least six times in the Gospel he is seen in prayer, and three of the parables recorded by Luke deal with the subject of prayer. No other Gospel shows the human tenderness of Jesus so fully as Luke does. Little children evoke his tenderest expressions of love. The woes of womankind appeal to him: he stops a funeral procession to restore a young man to life—"the only son of his mother, and she was a widow!" What a human touch! His deepest sympathy and his truest encouragement are reserved for the publicans and outcasts. No matter that they said—"This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." Indeed it is Luke's purpose to show that the approach of the Gospel to humanity's life is not determined by rank or condition or pride, but by human need and faith. It is the Gospel of sympathy and good cheer, the Gospel of the Friend of sinners, the Gospel of the Great Physician for our sin-smitten humanity. He who was himself called "the beloved physician" discerned in Jesus the supreme traits of the Physician of souls. The first sermon of Jesus recorded by Luke is the sermon preached in his own town (chapter iv). "He came to Nazareth where he had been brought up." The keynote of the ministry of the Son of Man as Luke presents it was sounded that day, when, opening to the Prophet Isaiah, he read, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor, he hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are

bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

Two notable chapters may be said to be highly typical of the entire Gospel. In the tenth chapter is found the ever-memorable parable of the Good Samaritan, our Lord's masterful and penetrative definition of a True Neighbor. Chapter fifteen is the chapter of "Lost Things"—the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son—a climactic description of God's unfailing interest in whatsoever is out of the way, that has altered the history of the world.

The picture in Luke's Gospel is that of Humanity's Best Friend, himself truly the Son of God, yet truly embraced in our humanity, the Son of Man.

### *The Life-Size Portrait.*

No less a title than this would be suitable for the Gospel according to John. The artist moves his camera nearer and obtains a picture which to the world in general, and especially to the Christian, has proved the most satisfying of the four. It is no injustice to the others to say that John's picture represents the nearest view of Jesus that the world can possibly have.

It was the peculiar privilege of the disciple whom Jesus loved and who leaned upon his bosom, that he was permitted in an unusual degree to see and understand the inner life of his Master. Partly this was a privilege of temperament. But also it is to be remembered that John wrote his account of Jesus after a long life of Christian experience, after his own view of the Master had been enriched by medita-

tion, and his experience mellowed by years. The difference between the fourth Gospel and the other three is at once expressed by the name given to Matthew, Mark, and Luke. They are called the Synoptic Gospels, because they aim to give a synopsis or general historical view. John's Gospel, on the contrary, is both less and more than the others. Written much later and in some sense supplementary to the others, it omits much of the material given by them. No details of the birth are given. Instead John states the mystery of the Incarnation in one sentence, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." No account of the baptism is given, though it is referred to in the words of the Baptist. The institution of the Lord's Supper is omitted, but prominence is given to the discourse on the Bread of Life (chapter vi). It is manifestly not John's intention to write a life of Jesus in the same manner as the others.

But if his Gospel is in this respect less than the others, it is in another respect vastly more. Every reader of the Gospel feels a difference at once, and by universal consent the fourth book of the New Testament is the best loved of the entire Bible. In part its attractiveness is found in the charm of its language. Matthew may deal most naturally with the institutional language of the Jewish world; Mark may take up most readily the language of the world and of common people; Luke may use the purest Greek of the New Testament; but John uses more than any other the language of the heart. "Let not your heart be troubled," "In my father's house are many mansions," "I am the vine, ye are the

branches," "Greater love hath no man than this," "I have called you friends." These are sentences that will live forever.

But there is something besides the language that gives character to this Gospel. The title given to it by an early writer has never been excelled. Clement of Alexandria called it "The Spiritual Gospel."

This is exactly what one feels upon opening the pages of John's story. To be sure it contains history. Indeed we are dependent upon it for the fullest account of the Judean ministry, and the events of the Last Week. It is, like the others, the story of the life of Christ, but besides this, it is an unfolding of his life, an analysis, an interpretation, a fervent, devout picture of the life and character of that Divine Being, who came into the world to be the Saviour of all who will believe. The atmosphere of devotion and spirituality is predominant on every page. This picture is drawn by one who knew his subject intimately, and loved him deeply, and out of his love and faith could make such a picture under the inspiring guidance of the Spirit, as the world can never forget.

The Apostle himself gives the key to his Gospel in his own words. "These (signs) are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (xx:31). He would write a history, but much more. He desires to lead his readers into such nearness to Christ, such appreciation of his life and work and character, such intense feeling of his unassassivable divinity, that they shall exclaim like Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" (xx:28). As Matthew is the Gos-

pel of the Messiah-King, as Mark is the Gospel of the Mighty Worker, as Luke is the Gospel of the Son of Man—John is preëminently the Gospel of the Son of God.

It is impossible to escape the force of the titles given to Jesus in this Gospel. “The Word,” “the Lamb of God,” “the Only Begotten Son,” “the Son of God,” “the Life,” “the Light,” “the Resurrection,”—such titles, together with such notable sentences of Jesus himself as—“Before Abraham was I am,” and, “I and the Father are One,” are a sweeping and unmistakable claim of the divinity of Jesus. The word of greatest emphasis in this Gospel is *belief*. “That ye may *believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” John uses the word *believe* fully one hundred times. There is a double development in the Gospel, one of belief and the other of unbelief. Almost every narrative plainly turns upon belief. This is “the movement of the Gospel.” The word that is co-ordinate with *belief* is the word *life*. “And that believing ye may have life.” The most frequently quoted verse of the Bible—the golden text of John’s Gospel—contains the four most important words of Christianity—“For God so *loved* the world, that he *gave* his only-begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth* on him should not perish, but have eternal *life*.” These words are the Gospel in a nutshell: they can never be forgotten. Professor Henry Drummond related that he was once sailing along the coast of Africa in company with four passengers who each spoke a different language. They could not understand one another, but by signs they managed to communicate, and at last each of the four

took out his Bible. All, as if by instinct, turned to the Gospel of John and pointed to the third chapter and sixteenth verse. The brotherhood that is established at the foot of the Cross is stronger than any other.

The four Gospels mingle together and produce a composite Picture that constitutes the principal element in the spiritual riches of the world. The four-fold story of Jesus is, moreover the chief fascination of the Book. More than all else they who teach and preach are required to bring these incomparable narratives in contact with the lives of men. In all the generations they have produced ethical awakening and spiritual regeneration. "When I preached philosophy," said one, "men applauded: when I preached Christ, men repented." Abraham Lincoln said that the two great events of his life were when he borrowed the *Life of Washington*, and when he opened the Bible and read the Life of Christ. When Henry Ward Beecher died he was engaged in writing a Life of Christ. His friend who stood by his funeral-bier said, "This hand that is so silent now laid aside the pen upon the unfinished Life of Christ." His life is still unfinished. There is a fifth Gospel, said Renan—the life of Christ in the lives of his disciples. "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

There is an impressive story of a student who went to a certain bishop to ask him what theological

works he should read on the life of Christ. The bishop thought a moment and then said—"I think you had better read first a little book written by a man named—Matthew." He paused and then went on. "And when you have read that you had better read another little book prepared by a man named—Mark." Another pause to give the student opportunity to recover from his surprise. Then the bishop continued. "And when you have read these, read another little book by a man named—Luke." A longer pause. "And finally," the bishop concluded, "when you have read these, there is another little book that you ought to read, written by a man named—John."

With these incomparable pictures of Jesus to present to the world, in sermon, in incident, in story, in philosophy, in song,—where is the teacher or preacher who will ever despair of interesting men in the Bible? Given a deep insight into the meaning of the Gospels, with some degree of skill in handling the material, and men cannot fail to be fascinated by the wonderful fourfold story. For it is true, as Principal Fairbairn has said, that "it is impossible to touch Jesus without touching millions of hearts now living or yet to live."

## XII

### THE STRENGTH OF THE PULPIT

IT is fatally easy to meet the questions and problems that arise in connection with the task of preaching with Paul's consummate advice to Timothy—"Preach the Word!"

We may venture the assertion that the Apostle's counsel has been sometimes overworked; at least it has been frequently misapplied. That a sermon crowded with scriptural quotations and allusions, or a sermon characterized by the strictest textual fidelity, or even a sermon fulfilling the accepted idea of expository preaching—that any or all of these types exhaust the meaning of "preaching the Word" cannot be freely admitted. Within the limits of certain common and accepted meanings most preachers of the present day are preaching the Word. And yet the state of preaching at the present time awakens a feeling of anxiety. It may well be asked: "If the modern preacher is truly preaching the Word, why does not the pulpit grow in power? Why does it appear instead to be waning as a moral and intellectual force?"

Many answers have been invented to account for the phenomenon of declining pulpit-power. The natural changes of society, the absorptions and rivalries of other forces (especially such as are edu-

cational), the prevailing scepticism of our age, the transition of the pulpit itself into a pervasive rather than a direct energy, and the note of uncertainty which has crept into the voice of the pulpit, all these have been alleged as active influences in producing an apparent diminution in the force of preaching. Nevertheless the fact stands that the "greatest danger confronting the Church of Christ in America to-day is a possible decadence of the pulpit,"\* and the Church seems already at times, as Matthew Arnold said of Shelley, like "a beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void her luminous wings in vain." With many new resources at hand, of education and training, of organization and method, it might be expected that the pulpit would develop new measures of power. It is indeed doubtful if the pulpit ever showed in general greater brilliancy than at the present time; preaching power is not lacking. Yet there is a missing note, an unfilled space in the arena of the modern preacher's task, which leaves him too often in the attitude of one "beating the air."

We are led to inquire therefore whether there may not be additional meanings in the injunction to "preach the Word," which have been too much neglected; new sources of pulpit-power which our age, more than any other, needs, and likewise has the capacity to enjoy. We must first briefly review the familiar sources of strength for the pulpit, and then try to set these in their proper relation with a biblical ministry.

\* Rev. Charles E. Jefferson, D. D., in a late volume (1905).

The sources of strength for the pulpit are three:

*Interest, Instruction, Inspiration.*

We cannot but feel that the first of these, *Interest*, is often very carelessly dealt with in considering the work of the ministry. Much has been said of a learned ministry, an orthodox, an eloquent, a scriptural, ministry; very little has been said about an *interesting* ministry. Indeed to many the word seems to suggest too low a plane for the consideration of so sacred a calling. Yet it must be admitted that *interest* is the first word in education and the *open sesame* to the inner sanctuary of the mind. The most frequent criticism heard of preaching and preachers is—"it is not interesting," "they do not interest me." A quick way of disposing of such criticisms is to say to the critic, "You ought to be interested." It is scarcely necessary to say that the modern world, with a hundred other sources of human interest close at hand, is not to be won by an *ought*. Charles Lamb replied quaintly to one who had charged him with aiming at wit, that such an aim "is at least as good as aiming at dulness." A discriminating editorial in a prominent American publication, referring to the discontinuance of a certain well-known magazine, discusses the reason for its failure in a frank and instructive manner. "It ceased to be," declares the editor, "because it was not interesting." He continues his comment—"The right of the uninteresting to live is as definitely assured by the constitution, not only of the United States, but of the existing order of things, as the

right of the interesting: but there is nowhere any recognition of their right to live off the community. To be interesting is one of the highest functions of art in all forms.” This naïve comment of the editor furnishes no little food for reflection on the matter of pulpit-power. The plain truth is that the pulpit, while not “aiming at dulness,” has sometimes forgotten to be interesting. The world’s complaint of dulness in the pulpit is by no means always a proof of a sinful heart. It may rather be an evidence of a natural craving of the heart for things that are vital, human, and interesting—a craving which refuses to content itself with dry husks thrust upon the soul with the plea of the sacredness of the ministry as their sanction. It is well to ask with great insistence, “May not that which is sacred rightly aim also to be interesting? Is it not in reality the highest kind of art—even of sacred art—to aim at producing a thrill of interest in the heart? And may not the minister in his pulpit count it worth his while, besides being scholarly, literary, eloquent, and orthodox, to be also—*simply interesting?*” We do not hesitate indeed to affirm that to be interesting should be among the primary aims of the preacher; all the more because the ministry more than most other occupations tends to dulness. The fact that it is meditative and didactic, that it involves of necessity much repetition, that it tends almost inevitably to run on “dead levels” and in “beaten tracks”—presents to the preacher at once that which constitutes one of his chief problems—*to keep alive, to sparkle with interest, to be fresh, vital, inspiring, helpful, and human.* It is no railing accusation

against the modern pulpit—scholarly, able, and eloquent as it is—to say that it furnishes a vast amount of dull preaching to a world that is keyed to interest in all other concerns. Literature is interesting, business is interesting, social life is interesting, education is interesting. Preaching is too often dull, flat, uninteresting. It lacks in *ad hominem*, or pec-toral power. It misses the point. It goes off into the air. It fails of contact with human life. It lives and moves and has its being in a sphere to which the average man is a stranger. It has a cer-tain aloofness, or sense of distance, that betokens a lack of sympathy with life in the midst of its stern realities. They who occupy our pulpits would do well to heed the pathetic criticism of preaching which arises at times from the thoughtful pew—"it does not appeal to me"—and to ask themselves sternly the reason why. Men must listen: and the task of the pulpit is to make them listen. It may be that if the Master were to come among his servants who proclaim his gospel, he would not charge them with any lack of pulpit grace or fidelity. Yet to them he might say—"One thing thou lackest—*Interest*: sell all thy goods and buy *Interest*."

There are, however, spurious kinds of interest to which the preacher cannot safely trust himself. No error of doctrine or practice is comparable with the mistake which the modern pulpit has made in failing to guard itself against false hopes and delusive methods. A grave temptation has come upon the ministry in our generation. Awake to the demand for interest, and pressed by the rivalry of many other concerns of life, some have fled from dulness

only to take refuge in spurious forms of interest. If preaching has degenerated, it has not been for lack of scholarship and brilliancy, neither for lack of opportunity; it has rather been because of misdirection. It has been a failure to understand aright the true source of interest in preaching, and a resulting substitution of the false for the true. Not a few have said to themselves—"If we are to hold the interest of men, we must fascinate them with skyrocket displays of rhetoric and sharp surprises of thought." To them the watchword of preaching is—*Sensation*. Others have said to themselves,—"If we are to hold the interest of men, we must entertain them with discussions of present events, of men and books of the hour, of politics, government, society, and travel." To them the watchword of preaching is—*Modernness*. Still others have said to themselves,—"If we are to hold the interest of men, we must make preaching easy, lightly touch the fancy of the mind, move pleasantly among the sensibilities of the soul; in short, produce a sense of pleasure." To them the watchword of preaching is—*Entertainment*. And still others, most plausibly of all, have said to themselves,—"If we are to hold the interest of men, we must stir their feelings with incident, narrative, illustration, and story." To them the watchword of preaching is—*Emotion*. These ideas have scarcely issued as yet in definite theories of preaching. At the same time they are with many creating a certain tone for the ministry, and establishing a certain norm and rubric of practice.

It is sufficient to say, in refuting the claims of these false ideas of preaching, that they are "broken cis-

terns that can hold no water." They involve a faulty definition of interest. They may create temporary and superficial interest, but they have no power of imperative with the soul. They cannot move deeply upon the nature of man, and reach the foundations of his being. Sermons that are the product of these ideas may belong to the literature of taste, but they can never rank with the literature of power. If the modern preacher needs to recognize Interest as a source of power, he needs also to determine for himself very clearly and carefully the true means of creating interest, in order to discriminate between the true and the false. Nothing is more degrading to the pulpit than to depend upon spurious forms of interest. In the end the emptiness of all such methods will be revealed. The sensational sermon, for example, will obtain a certain vogue for itself; but the sensational preacher may assure himself in advance that his method is wholly incapable of creating reliable interest in the soul. The same objection lies against preaching that depends upon the stirring of the feelings. Sermons of this sort may be *efficient*, but they are not *sufficient*. This is the peril of Evangelistic movements in the church. The preaching that goes with such movements usually tends to produce spasmodic action; but it leaves oftentimes a meagre deposit of interest in the heart. There is yet to come an Evangelism that shall depend less upon the thrill of conviction produced by stories of experience, and more upon the appeal to genuine and constructive interest.

What, then, is the true means of creating interest?

Having in view the fact that interest is the first law of the pulpit, what method or methods are most appropriate and efficient in awakening genuine interest? The answer to this question, it is hoped, has already appeared in the preceding pages. It requires, however, more explicit treatment in this chapter. We have written in vain if we have not given some force to the appeal for the Bible as being an interesting Book, as containing in fact the elements of human interest and feeling that relate it naturally and easily to the human mind. We are now prepared to insist that the preacher in his pulpit has in the Bible the means ready at hand for producing true interest. We venture to lay down this proposition—*a biblical ministry is an interesting ministry*. We use the term *interesting* in its ordinary meaning. We mean, in other words, to affirm that the preacher who will avail himself of the material furnished him in the Bible has possessed himself of the key to interest. We contend that the contents of the Scripture, in variety, in outlook, in humanness, in the fascination of form and the imperative of thought, are such as to be naturally promotive of interest. And we hold further that the preacher, distrusting other means of creating interest, should address himself constantly to the wise and skilful use of the Bible, as the surest means of promoting interest. Let the preacher himself learn the fascination of the Book, and this will be the beginning of interest with his people. A Bible-saturated pulpit means a Bible-interested pew.

A study of the second and third sources of strength for the pulpit likewise brings us to the

Bible. The second source of strength for the pulpit is—*Instruction*. The preacher is called in the nature of the case to be a teacher. Making due allowance for varying types in the ministry, it is still to be confessed that every preacher is designed to be a teacher. It is true, however, that the idea of preaching of late years has separated itself from the idea of teaching. Instead of incorporating the idea of teaching in that of preaching, modern preachers have shown a marked tendency to create a distinctive type of preaching, which, whatever its virtues and its force, is strikingly lacking in teaching power. Hence there has grown up an unconscious antagonism between preaching and teaching that ought not to exist. The discussion, for example, of “A Preaching Ministry and a Teaching Ministry” betokens a false distinction, a lack of co-ordination that is one secret of weakness in the modern pulpit. It is held that the influence of Schleiermacher is responsible for the creation of this notion of preaching as apart from teaching, that has characterized late generations.\* Schleiermacher believed that the proper aim of preaching is not to teach, but to communicate and produce feeling. Robertson of Brighton on the other hand exerted a powerful influence, which is still felt among preachers of many lands, in behalf of the teaching function of the pulpit. It is noticed that the sermons of Robertson contain a certain objective quality that arises out of the ever-present groundwork of Bible teaching. There is about them an architectonic impression, a feeling of their being

\* See Brastow's *Representative Modern Preachers*, p. 34.

built up from a true foundation, according to an authorized plan or system, which secures for them a sort of categorical imperative in the mind. The grip and power of Robertson's sermons are due in large measure to the instructional element that underlies them. Yet it is not instruction of the bare kind, rather of an interpretative quality, that gives it vogue with the mind.

It is an evil day for the preacher when the educational ideal disappears. The primitive force of the pulpit lies in its teaching function. Jesus himself was a Teacher, never a Preacher in the modern sense of the term. His apostles after him were simple teachers of the Word and the Doctrine. The technical conception of preaching as a separate art grew up later with the fascination of the audience and the temptation to eloquence. Despite all these changes the power that underlies the pulpit is still Instruction. In every direction the need is emphasized to-day of a return to the early idea of preaching as being essentially a process of teaching. The educational view-point in religion is the emphatic need of the hour. Nor is this to be construed for one moment as implying the mere dry bones of teaching, the dry and rigid process of imparting information. On the contrary, it contemplates the giving basis and body to preaching, the infusion into it of elemental force, the production of objectivity and power of contact, the pressure of reality and nature. The educational ideal in preaching, so far from involving a dry-as-dust process, is vital with power and vascular with influence. It closes no door of entrance that is now open for the preacher into the heart, and

it opens other doors that are now rusting their hinges. The modern ministry could not bring to the church a more delightful surprise than the surprise of new doors opened in the ministry of the Word. Humdrum and dulness would flee away and a new era of discovery would come upon the church.

For the purpose of instruction the preacher has received the Bible as his appointed text-book, and is therewith called to make the most abundant and most skilful use possible of this potent instrument of instruction. In form the Book is evidently meant to be a vehicle of instruction. It is pedagogical and constructive in its plan of arrangement. It asks to be taught; it pleads for opportunity with the formative instincts of the mind; it desires to be put to the test of an educational method, having in view the up-building of character, neither by spasm nor by hap-hazard, but by the architectural system of the Kingdom of God, which is "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear."

But it is freely admitted that Interest and Instruction must pass over into—*Inspiration*. Inspiration is the third and completing source of power in the pulpit. It should be clearly recognized that all methods, all plans, are inadequate that fail to contribute ultimately to this life-purpose of inspiration. There will be, of course, many by-products in the work of the pulpit; but the main product must be the manifestation of what Jesus came to give—*abundant life*. Now it should go without saying that however the pulpit may adorn itself with secular things, with all graces of expression and form and

skill and method, with even the fulness of literary, historical, scientific, or political material, its natural and most effective means of inspiration is the Word of God. The Bible is not only an inspired Book: it is also a Book that inspires. To bring it in close contact with men is to make their lives more efficient, to open new doors and vistas of hope and feeling, to stir them to higher fidelity and stronger resolve. Sabbath after Sabbath, year after year, as the pastor leads his flock into the presence of the creative idealism of the Bible, he is slowly producing within them the desire of the hills, the uplift and inspiration of the great things of God. Hawthorne tells the story of the boy in the valley who, looking at the stone face on the mountain day after day, was inspired to go out into the world and serve a noble purpose. Nothing inspires to life and service like vital contact with the Bible.

Having now in mind the dependence of the pulpit upon the Bible for the fullest and most efficient realization of strength, we proceed to offer some practical suggestions as to the preacher's use of the Scripture in promoting Interest, Instruction, and Inspiration.

We have already suggested that the most important problem in the life of the church at the present time is the problem of bringing the people in close contact with the Word of God. There can be no question of the responsibility of the pulpit for the solution of this problem. The business of the pulpit is to devote itself to the Bible, for the purpose of bringing men under the spell of its divine contents. It goes without saying therefore that the preacher

must always be confronting the question, *How can I best lay the Book to the hearts of the people?* The range of this question is broad enough to allow very great flexibility in the answer, and also abundant individuality in method. What we have to insist upon, however, is that the preacher should constantly keep the question in mind. So doing, his ministry is certain to bring forth from year to year a more abundant harvest. The greatest *desideratum* in the church to-day is a pulpit that is enriched and adorned by the Word of God. When the preacher strikes this keynote, when he determines that he will omit no pains in learning how to unfold the Scripture, how to fascinate men with its eager message, how to dominate men with its power until they shall not be able to let it alone, he has unconsciously opened the door into a new era of his ministry. It requires no prophetic gift to say that, given a body of men in the ministry who are enthusiasts for the Bible, we shall have a new type of life rising in the Christian church. The era of organization in the church has distinct values for progress. So also are the eras of missions and evangelism accompanied with benefits which cannot be estimated. But we are constrained to believe that there is a deeper need in the church—*the need of an era in pulpit and pew of enthusiasm for the Word of God.*

There are abundant signs that such an era is already at hand. The next decade will probably witness in the church, and in related organizations beyond the church, a widespread interest in the Bible. Having multiplied organizations and piled up machinery, having emphasized service and

pressed our propaganda of missions and evangelism, what if, along with all these good works, the church should hear the call in the next ten years to take the Bible in hand and sit down as never before to intensive and productive study? What if the minister, recognizing this need, should prepare himself by methods, more pedagogical and practical than scholastic, for leadership in this direction; should give himself with hearty devotion to the real ministry of the Word, searching eagerly for whatsoever method will help him to inspire interest therein with the people? What if stress should be laid upon the effort to co-ordinate all the forces of the church, especially the Home, the Sabbath School, the Prayer Meeting and the Pulpit, to the end of securing a constructive and propulsive knowledge of the Word of God? What, in short, if the church, led by an enthusiastic ministry, should devote itself as never before to the task of becoming acquainted with its Sacred Literature? It is impossible to frame a temperate answer to such questions. Suffice it to say that the results of such a programme would no doubt exceed the most spectacular dream of the enthusiast. Contemplating such things as a possibility of the ensuing years, one is tempted to predict that the task of preaching in the next decade will be richer and worthier than ever before in the history of the church. Certain it is that the church is calling now for preachers who, like the householder, shall bring forth out of their treasure things new and old. The fascination of the Old Book must be laid upon the people. They who are in the pulpit must first know that fascination for themselves; and must also

set themselves to learn how to bring it to pass in the minds of others.

We are not so bold as to affirm that a new definition of preaching is required for the realization of this programme. On the contrary, the old forms of preaching ought still to prevail, doctrinal, historical, biographical, hortatory, evangelistic. The old methods likewise require no displacement. Sermons should continue to be as before, textual, topical, or expository, according to the judgment of the preacher. But the programme of preaching should contemplate a broader ideal, an ideal that will pervade both form and method. *Preaching should be educational.* This is the broad aim that must control in the outworking of larger plans for the pulpit. It should be remembered, however, that we use the term, not to describe a bare process of imparting knowledge, but to include all the rich possibilities contained in Interest, Instruction, and Inspiration. The preacher is in reality a "religious educationist." The Bible is his material; it remains for him to determine his method in accordance with this broad aim. However great the glamour of the mere art of preaching, however strong from every side the temptation to reduce preaching to a process of impressionism, it must be evident to thoughtful minds that preaching is most worthy and most efficient when it has a background of continuity, an architectural ideal that is to be wrought out in forms of human construction. As the great architect saw the Dome of St. Peter's swinging beneath the sky in his mind long before it was actually erected, so the preacher must see his congregation growing under his hands

and becoming "thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Like the teacher in the school, he is called to do, not the work of one day, but the growing work of years. His task is not merely to preach great sermons, but to build men up in life and godliness, to initiate and carry on a process of religious tutelage and nurture that shall bear fruit now and in the far-away years.

The effect of this conception of the ministry upon preaching is almost revolutionary. The Bible ceases to be a Book that is to be merely exploited for sermons, and the sermon itself is no longer an isolated product. The Bible becomes instead the Book that is intended for God's education of man; and the preacher is an appointed educator carrying out a broad system of education. With this broadened aim for his ministry, his study of the Bible and his use of it are apt to take on a new aspect. He is training a people in divine things and must therefore use all the material and method at his command. Saturating his mind in the Book that is placed in his hands, its broad usefulness for human life appears, its educational values come to light, its wonderful adaptations to the stages of intelligence and growth in man's mind stand forth, its pedagogical structure and initiative are seen, and its points of contact are made clear. Asking himself daily the question, "How can I make this Book live and do its work of transformation and education with men?" he comes to see the variety and attractiveness of its material; his own heart thrills with interest and enthusiasm; in the separate books he sees the shining of God's light as through the

facets of a diamond; he warms to his task as he realizes that he is doing a great work of training for God; sermons spring up unbidden in the pathways of the Word; preaching obtains new purpose and a new sense of continuity; and the joy of the task is like unto the joy of one who realizes that he is building the foundations and walls of a kingdom that shall never pass away.

And here we are bound to say, that the schools for the training of ministers have singularly failed to grasp the need of presenting the educational aspect of the ministry. Secular education has its Normal Schools where teachers are trained in the material and method of teaching. It cannot be said that the Theological Seminary approaches as yet the ideal of a Normal School for religious teachers. Crowded as the courses of the Theological Seminary already are, there is an imperative demand, from the practical side of the work of the church, for some course or courses in which religious education should be studied as a definite factor in the ministry, in which also the student should be trained in the actual use of the English Bible both in and out of the pulpit. We are strongly convinced that our theological schools should bend every energy in the next decade towards an effort to furnish the church with preachers, who, in the period of their special training, have been brought in close contact with the English Bible, which they are afterwards to teach; have been imbued with its spirit and brought under its personal spell; and moreover have been trained expressly in the art of making full use of its educational values for the people. It is a strange

omission that, with every provision made in the theological schools for scholarly approach to the Word of God, no provision is made (except the slight beginnings in several institutions) for the educational valuation of the Bible, that is, for directing the student in the art of religious training through the Scripture. The time may come when a chair of Religious Education will be regarded as necessary to round out the work of the Theological Seminary. This department, without duplicating the work of Exegesis, Introduction, or homiletical study in other departments, would undertake to throw the fullest light of educational training upon the task of preaching and teaching the English Bible.\*

At the risk of appearing in the rôle of a critic of existing institutions, a rôle which all men should be slow to assume, the author ventures to suggest that there are several important lines of training for the ministry that seem to be almost wholly neglected. We are strongly inclined to think that it is a poor educational economy to multiply linguistic opportunities for the student, while the practical

\* The need is admirably stated by Professor Melancthon W. Jacobus, D. D., of Hartford Theological Seminary. See *Proceedings of the Religious Education Association*, 1904, p. 169. After referring to the just criticism "freely lodged against the Seminaries, that they fail to prepare and equip their men for the practical work of the ministry," he continues—"It must be manifest, however, that what is needed in English Bible work is not the mere acquainting of students with the contents of the English Scriptures—a process which has all the dangers of an English course parallel with the regular course—but the distinctive instruction of the student, on the basis of the critical work he has already done with the Bible in Hebrew and Greek, in the

aspects of the ministry, especially as related to the task of handling the Word of God aright, receive so little amplification. The moment one realizes that the theological school is charged with the duty of training the religious teachers of the Nation, he is confronted with what must seem to him very serious gaps in the theological course. The time cannot be too quickly hastened forward, when, by addition, combination, or amplification, provision shall be made in the theological school for the following:—

1. Definite instruction in the principles of Scripture pedagogy. That is, the study of the laws of teaching as applied and adapted to the material of the Bible. 2. Definite study of the methods and problems of Christian Nurture in the church. This field in the life and work of the church is almost a new one. Many thoughtful educators are studying the problem of child nurture from the standpoint of secular education; but the church is scarcely yet aware of the issue. The church has at present no logical and connected system of Christian Nurture. It would be well for this generation to sit down

practical use of the English Bible in his ministry; in its management, as a book to be preached from the pulpit; in its treatment, as a book to be taught in the Schools of the Church; in its handling, as a book to be used in the inquiry room and in general evangelistic work; and in its absorption, as a book to be communed with in his own religious life. In these days of reviving spiritual life, the signs of which are everywhere about us, the Seminaries will prove recreant to their most solemn responsibility and show themselves blind to their grandest opportunity, if they miss the chance of installing among their required courses this course of instruction in the practical and personal use of the English Scriptures."

again at the feet of Horace Bushnell,\* to learn anew the value of religious education, and "the out-populating power of the Christian stock." It is estimated that sixty per cent. of the boys who are committed by circumstances to the care of the church pass out of the Sabbath School and away from the church, and are lost in the great careless world. Surely it is time in the schools of the church to give attention to the problem of Christian Nurture for the young. In such a department as this the Sabbath School and the Young People's Society should be carefully studied, with the view of learning how to build them into a constructive and systematic economy of religious education in the church. 3. Definite instruction in handling the Word as an instrument of spiritual education. Here it should be, neither the Hebrew nor the Greek text, but the English Bible that should be in hand. For this purpose the tools of criticism are not needed, yet the results of critical study may contribute here to practical ends. What is needed, however, is to give the student skill in handling the Book, and even more, to give him a sympathetic feeling for the Book and a buoyant confidence in its power for life. The things to be taught here have some of them been suggested in previous chapters, for example, the interest of history, the grasp of the books, the value of imagination, the charm of letters, the fineness of the form, etc. In short, whatever will contribute to interest, whatever is really educative, whatever will help to install the Bible in the minds of the people, not only as a Revelation, but also as God's protective measure against sin and

\* See especially his volume on *Christian Nurture*.

in behalf of holiness. There is enough under these headings to constitute a separate department of theological study; and we are constrained to believe that these things must soon assume due importance if the church is really to profit by the new and broadened aims of religious education.

What the church needs is a ministry well-founded of course in scholarly knowledge of the Word of God, skilled if possible in handling the tools of criticism, and well furnished in defensive tactics—but more, a ministry imbued with an irresistible enthusiasm for the Bible as an instrument of religious life and culture, and furnished with the beginnings at least of a training in the best methods of communicating that enthusiasm to the people.

Let us suppose now that the educational conception of the ministry has taken hold of the minister—what practical directions may his work take in the outworking of the ideal?

*First. In the Pulpit.* What is needed is not so much a change in the form of preaching as a broader idea underlying it. Let the preaching contribute to the constructive knowledge of the Book. This implies a process of systematic education from the pulpit. Even the public reading of the Scripture should bend to this end. It is possible with even a little skill to make this part of the public service very important. In a month of five Sabbaths, for example, read the First Epistle of John, with brief comment on each chapter as read, for the purpose of acquainting the congregation with the contents of this epistle *en large*. Occasional sermons on the Bible as a whole are desirable, and are calculated to

inspire interest in the Book. Popular feeling for the Bible should be stimulated in every legitimate way. Let the minister aim to evoke such expressions as these—"What an *interesting* Book it is!" "I never saw *that* in the Bible before!" "It really seems to have something to say to me!" What is needed is popular ardor for the Scripture, a feeling of delight in the Book. Such themes as the following for occasional treatment afford abundant opportunity to show the broad relations of the Word to life—"The Bible the Most Interesting Book in the World"—"The Bible and the Average Man"—"The Bible as a Literature of Courage"—"The Bible in Literature and Art"—"The Bible and Conversation"—"The Bible in Human Institutions"—"The Bible and Memory"—"The Architectural Plan of the Bible"—"The Bible by Periods"—"Ruling Ideas in the Bible"—"The Great Scenes of the Bible"—"Great Chapters of the Bible"—"The Bridge of Silence, or, the Period between the Old and New Testaments." There may well be also an occasional sermon on ways and means, in which the minister may wisely make helpful suggestions that are calculated to lead to a regular habit of reading the Scripture. The writer once advised an audience of young people to search the Scripture systematically; but was dismayed to find himself reported in the morning paper as having advised the young people to search the Scripture *spasmodically*. To substitute *systematic* for *spasmodic* reading is the first victory in the training of a congregation. But methods and plans will not take very deep hold unless there is also some relish for the Book itself developed along with method. There-

fore, it must be the effort of the minister, in his own use of the Bible in the pulpit, to awaken love, admiration, and desire for the Book. Every sermon may contribute in some degree to this end, although all sermons cannot be alike biblical in content. Every sermon can at least leave an impression of the proper *range* of preaching, as being within the covers of this Book, even while drawing much related material from the outside. The minister's own liberty and facility with the Book, his glad and confident spirit in handling it, his sense of masterly hopefulness in passing in the course of a year's ministrations from part to part, from book to book, finding everywhere the same great message of life and salvation, like "the wild joy of living and leaping from rock to rock," which the poet Browning describes—all this can at least be breathed into the spirit of the sermon, whatever be the form of it. A concrete example of this art of *putting the Bible forth* always in preaching may be found in the matter of illustration. There is no better way of fixing the attention of a congregation upon the Bible itself, than by showing how adequate the Bible is for the full presentation of an idea. Suppose the theme to be *Quality vs. Quantity*. (1) The glamour of quantity. Illustration: David's numbering the people. (2) The danger of forgetting quality. Illustration: Jotham's parable of the Bramble-King. (3) The conquering power of quality. Illustration: Gideon's Band. Here the illustrations themselves are made to suggest the range and fulness of the Scripture, while they furnish also abundant opportunity for objective impression through the imagination.

No method is of greater value in obtaining breadth in preaching than occasional preaching on entire books of the Bible. It has also great possibilities in education. There are dangers accompanying it, and it is not to be attempted without careful preparation. Nevertheless, it may be expected in nearly every case to produce the surprise of variety, and the solidity of massed material. Let the minister, for instance, as often as once a month or once in two months, resolve his evening congregation into an imaginary Bible Class, frequently with blackboard and chalk to assist him, and let him present in a half hour of brisk, illustrative, and familiar discourse, the contents and the meaning of one book of the Bible, in every case leading up to the personal message of the Bible for the soul. After an interval let him take another book in like manner. Or they may be given in connected series, as the four Gospels on four Sabbaths, or the books of the Pentateuch in a month of five Sabbaths. In a ministry of ten years, it might be possible to teach the whole Bible in course to a congregation. Meantime, such study upon the part of the minister would furnish more material than he could handle for ordinary textual and topical sermons. One of the chief advantages of this method is that it tends to cure the waste of preaching. Most preachers are confined to limited areas of the Scripture. More than nine-tenths of Bushnell's published sermons are based on the New Testament. What an incalculable loss that this great preacher did not draw upon the treasure of the Old Testament! We can conceive of no method that will so quickly redeem the pulpit from the odium of

dulness and the fixity of routine as a method that requires the preacher to go up and down the pathways of the Word and find his material everywhere. Let the preacher once realize that he has neglected portions of the Word of God, that there are rooms of the Palace that he seldom enters, and he will be driven to find for himself some new plan that will carry both him and his people into the *whole field* of Scripture. But whatever the method or methods, and whatever the plan or style of preaching, let the minister in the pulpit determine that it is his duty to put the Bible forth always and everywhere, and to do his utmost to enamour the people with its spiritual power and grace.

*Second.* *In the Congregation.* With the pulpit dropping its "handfuls of purpose" at every service, and offering constant stimulus in the matter of Bible interest, there is even a wider field for the minister, as a promoter of the Word of God, in the work of co-ordinating the forces of the church and crystallizing them about a definite enthusiasm for the Scripture. In the next decade there will be no doubt many who will ask how to do this, for it is increasingly apparent that the church must live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. The need for interest is especially felt in the Sabbath School, which is only coming now into the field of real study. The need of consecrated and skilful teachers is constantly referred to in the discussion of the Sabbath School. There is another need that is quite as insistent, although it is less frequently discussed. This is the need of pastors who have an intelligent grasp of the educational problem

of the Sabbath School. It must suffice to say here that the alignment of forces in the congregation for Bible interest will naturally begin with the Sabbath School; and it is a careless pastor who fails to make full use of this coign of vantage. With a weekly Teachers' Meeting as a consulting cabinet, with the Home Department as a valuable adjunct for adults, with a Normal Training Class as a help in the creation of an educational atmosphere, the pastor must labor both directly and indirectly to make of the Sabbath School a real institute within the church of Bible knowledge and interest. In another chapter this topic is discussed more fully.\*

The next point of emphasis for Bible interest is the Prayer Meeting. This is to be regarded as pre-eminently the pastor's Bible Class. Here, almost better than anywhere else, he should be able to bring his people in close touch with the Scripture, and conduct them through a course of Bible training. Some of the methods of Bible teaching suggested for the pulpit may preferably be used in the prayer meeting, especially the study of books. In the prayer meeting there is ample opportunity on occasions to employ the classroom method, to resolve the meeting at times into a real Bible class, and to study actually after the method of the *seminar* the book in hand. We are convinced also that the Young People's Society ought to be included very definitely in this process of co-ordinating the forces of the church for Bible interest. This topic also is treated more fully in another chapter.† Nor

\* See Chapter XIII, "The Scripture and Childhood."

† See Chapter XIII.

should the missionary societies be allowed to drift away from the influence of the Scripture. Nothing indeed tends to promote missionary activity more than earnest Bible study. In short, let the pastor aim to unify his congregation about the Bible. Let him do his utmost to create a true enthusiasm for the Word of God. "Consider," says Dr. Walter L. Hervey, "the effect of the deep resolve of a minister, himself on fire with the spirit of study and of teaching, to make every man, woman, and child, in his congregation eagerly interested in the study of the Bible." In one church the pastor has instituted what he is pleased to call a Bible College, articulating all the educational forces of the church about the idea of knowing and teaching the Scripture. In this plan the work of the organization is supplemented by special sermons and by occasional lectures on the Bible and Missions. The plan contemplates systematic and continuous training in the Word of God from the Cradle Roll up to the Pulpit.

But besides these special efforts through the organization, there is the wider effort that seeks to enlist an entire congregation in reading—simple reading of the Bible. The most strategic thing a pastor can do is to persuade his congregation to read the Bible. A Bible-reading congregation is ready for every good word and work. Let the minister, after much quiet preparation and seed-sowing, appoint a day to be known as Bible Sabbath—for example, the first Sabbath of the year. Let him preach very earnestly at both services about the Bible, its fitness for human need, and man's dependence upon it. Let him appeal to heads of families, to busy men and

women, to give it a regular place in their lives. At the close of each service let him call for a Bible enrolment, that is, an enrolment of those who are willing during the year to pursue some regular plan of Bible reading. The emphasis in this effort is put upon the idea of enlisting an entire congregation in this one thing—*reading the Word of God.*\* Without being technical, this plan is in reality truly educational; whilst it tends also to the promotion of interest. For we must return again and again to the axiom that all methods must make for interest.

*Third. In the Community.* We must be content here with raising the question of the possibility of enlisting entire communities in Bible reading and Bible study. The results already obtained in this direction are most encouraging.† Suppose that a half dozen or more ministers of any community, imbued with the idea of securing a larger interest in the Word of God, should agree to federate their churches about this one thing. Suppose that they should devote every energy for a given season to ac-

\* This plan, as used by the author in his own church, has secured important although quiet results. A printed sheet for enrolment was prepared, indicating the various opportunities afforded in the church as follows: 1. Sabbath School. 2. Home Department. 3. Normal Class. 4. Memorizers' League. 5. Endeavor Societies. 6. Classes of the Young Men's and Women's Associations. 7. Bible Readers' Course. 8. The Prayer-Meeting (The Pastor's Bible Class). An immediate and visible result was the large increase in the prayer meeting. An evident quickening was felt all along the line of the church work almost akin to a revival.

† See "Popular Bible Study by Communities," an address by Charles A. Brand, *Proceedings of the Religious Education Association*, 1905, p. 202.

complish this end. The Sabbath School, the Prayer Meeting, the Young People's Society would receive renewed attention. Sermons would be made to look in this direction. Bible rallies might be held at intervals. A monthly lecture might be given before a union audience. Neighborhood classes might be organized with cottage prayer meetings as an adjunct. In short the entire enthusiasm of the church might be centred for the time about the Bible. Results could not be foretold; they can only be imagined. Beyond all question it would be better than a revival.

## XIII

### THE SCRIPTURE AND CHILDHOOD

THE purpose of this chapter is to lay stress upon certain points in teaching that may be regarded as constituting its strength and strategy. It is impossible to overestimate the teaching function of the church. The main business of the church is to teach, either directly or indirectly. That this truth has been but dimly perceived and realized goes without saying. The church has had its Age of Preaching, its Age of Organization, its Age of Missionary Expansion, its Age of Evangelism, its Age of Social Service. It has never yet had a great Age of Teaching. Surely there is something more than the baseless fabric of a dream in the hope which many indulge, that the coming age of the church will be marked no less by intensive application to its inward life and growth, than by extensive application to its outward growth and expansion.

The main reason for this hope is found in the appreciation of the child that marks present-day thought and plan. Dante was far ahead of his time when he said, "Faith, art, and innocence belong to little children." All the centuries have known the child, but it was left to the nineteenth century to acknowledge him as a leading factor in human life. Pestalozzi and Froebel made it impossible to ignore the child. Much of the new spirit that has come

into modern life, especially as it is interpreted through literature and education, is due to the freer and wiser recognition of the importance of childhood. It is difficult to estimate the value of the revolution that has been wrought in this subject. Formerly the world's systems of education were evolved from certain preconceived theories by a process of deduction, and the child himself was lightly considered. Latterly induction has come into play, and our present systems of education are based upon the study of the child and his need.

Slowly the church is coming to feel the presence of this new and better-informed spirit. Not to do so is, indeed, an easy method of self-extinction. We have heard of a church in which a Teachers' Meeting was regarded as an anachronism, and a Normal Training Class as a mistaken enthusiasm. When the church grows wise enough to take more pains in planning for the children than for the adults committed to its care, it will have come at last to the viewpoint of the Master who "set a child in the midst of his disciples." The child, indeed, is the chief asset of the church. The new appreciation of childhood has constituted one of the marked changes of recent years. The plaint of the old man that when he was a child nobody was interested in childhood and everybody was reverential to old age, and now that he had become old nobody was interested in old age, but everybody was reverential toward childhood—is almost pathetic; nevertheless, it describes a very important difference that has transpired in the estimate of life. Commenting upon this change, an editor discriminately says, "Age has lost its

terrors since men have learned that it is the heart of the child in the man that keeps him fresh, inventive, creative, and interesting." Slowly, almost painfully, the fuller meaning of the Lord's words dawns upon our consciousness—"Except ye become as little children." Certain elements of childhood must be perpetuated, both in education and religion. Keep the child alive in the man, and you have already dispensed with some of life's problems. James Russell Lowell was once passing a large building in London, when his attention was attracted by an inscription over the entrance: "Home for Incurable Children." Turning to his companion he said, with a whimsical smile, "They'll take me there some day." That the childhood of the race is incurable, especially in the case of selected individuals, is a constant ground of hope for mankind. While men still keep youth within their hearts, all kindly things of life, things that are simple, brave, pure, imaginative, hopeful—things that are of the fabric of faith, will appeal to them. Thus it is that the words of Christ, "Except ye become as little children," have behind them the argument of the facts and needs of life itself.

It is an impressive fact that the Bible exhibits peculiar adaptations to the needs of childhood. We do not mean that the entire contents are level to the understanding of children; but that the Book as a whole is calculated to captivate the child mind, while many separate features of it are especially adapted to his sense of appreciation. In short, the approach of the Bible to the child is easy and natural, and the points of contact are numerous. This statement in itself is conclusive as to the laws that

should govern Scripture pedagogy. Childhood and youth present a preëminent opportunity for instruction in the Word, and not alone for instruction; but also for laying upon the mind a permanent spell of fascination. If the church truly covets the best gifts, it will not be indifferent to the skill that interests children in the Bible. For this is in reality the laying of foundations for the Kingdom. The church could plan no better strategy than the strategy of intensive application to the problem of teaching the Bible to children. The Book itself invites the church to this task. The arrangement of the Bible falls in readily with pedagogical laws and methods. That is, it is easily taught—it yields without difficulty to the natural processes of the mind. Its pages are crowded with material that adapts itself without strain of effort to the comprehension of a child. It is truly wonderful how easily the Bible lodges itself in the memory and imagination of children. Its appeal is natural and irresistible. Its variety, its movement, its incident, its spectacles of men and affairs, its imaginative quality, its large element of narration, its underlying power of history, its gift of surprise, its initiative of courage, daring, and adventure—such qualities as these give the Book a natural vogue with children, that is possessed by no other literature in an equal degree. This remarkable adaptation of the Scripture to the task of teaching is almost the most impressive fact with which the church has to deal. It may be said without exaggeration that an adequate comprehension of this fact would fairly revolutionize the work of the church. It would at least change the points of

emphasis; it would reveal hidden possibilities and would tend to develop latent powers. We return again, from the view-point of the child and his interest, to our oft-repeated statement—the chief problem of the church is the application of the Book to human life. In the case of the child this problem is acute and pressing. To possess the minds of children with the fascination of the Book, to entwine their young associations “about the felicities and majesty of biblical phraseology,” to give them, with their mother’s milk, a feeling of interest and affection for the Book such as later and colder studies cannot develop—it is impossible to over-emphasize the anxiety and toil which the church ought to give to this part of its task. Paul congratulates Timothy that from a *babe* he has known the Holy Scripture (II Timothy iii: 15).

There are four points of contact with the child upon which the church must bring to bear its growing intelligence and its enlarging skill. These are the Home, the Sabbath School, the Young People’s Society, and the Pulpit. Each of these furnishes a field of study sufficient to occupy the best minds of the church. We have no new instruction to offer upon these oft-discussed topics. We are, however, concerned to emphasize again the view-point that has been assumed throughout this volume, viz., that the chief strategy of the church lies in captivating the mind with interest. All methods are insecure and inadequate that fail to awaken interest. However we may have failed to make the value of this thought appear in relation to the adult mind, it must certainly enforce itself in its application to

the child. Yet we are compelled to say that the church's comprehension of this fact has appeared at times to be very dim. The mistake of emphasis has been often too apparent. Eager to *inform* the minds of its children and youth in the contents of the Scripture, the church has lost sight of the underlying need of *interest*. The most distressing phenomenon of the church's life to-day is the spectacle of a large company of her children and youth, who have been well instructed in the Book, passing on into an era of neglect, wherein the Bible becomes a closed Book and ceases to exercise its potent sway with the mind; or passing even farther, into an era of unbelief, wherein all early predilections give way to the invasions of later years. That mere instruction, however complete, is inadequate, is abundantly proved by the results of the German *Religion's-unterricht*, which furnishes an abundant stock of knowledge, but fails to prevent the growing estrangement from the church which is conspicuous in German life to-day.\* It is very clear, from painful experience in every quarter of the church, that instruction may fail of finding the heart. How can the child mind be thoroughly pre-occupied by interest in the Book? How can the period of original and natural interest in the Book that belongs to childhood be prevented from passing insensibly, as it often does, into a later period of stagnation or hostility? In short, how can the *hiatus* between childhood and

\* See address by Mr. Edward O. Sisson, B. Sc., A. B., Assistant Professor of Education, University of Illinois, "Religion's-unterricht and Its Results," *Proceedings of the Religious Education Association*, 1905, p. 261.

later life in respect to the Bible be closed, so that the church may carry her children forward from stage to stage, with decreasing rather than increasing peril of change? No questions of the church's life exceed these in importance. Our answer, in brief, to these questions, leads in the direction of a change of emphasis, whereby it shall become a greater thing to possess the heart by interest, than to fill the mind with instruction. Let us consider briefly the several points of contact with young minds in the light of this thought.

1. *The Home.* It is needless to urge the importance of the home in human culture. The home has the power of initiative and prerogative with the child. "An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy." But while this general truth of the value of the home has been freely recognized, it is doubtful if adequate specific emphasis has been laid upon the work of the home in initiating the tastes and feelings of childhood. The problem of religious culture emerges at this point in its true colossal proportions. That the home often brings the child to the church with a handicap of indifference which can never be overcome is too plain to require proof or argument. If the church can ever succeed in giving distinctive religious value to the home, the problem of religious culture will be more than half solved. Despite the existence of many obstacles, it is no time for despair. Education is an atmospheric influence to-day as never before. In all secular lines training is highly accentuated. The national interest in education has become pervasive and is almost a popular passion. By dint of long persuasion, the

public school has at length won the home to a real show of enthusiasm for education. The home in reality is the most conservative and intractable of our social forces; but when once it is arrayed on the side of any cause its influence is irresistible. The chief victory of the cause of secular education in this generation is the winning of a real ally of education in the home. Now the vision that captivates the minds of many who are interested in the establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth, is the possibility of extending the educational enthusiasm of the hour into the realm of morals and religion, and more specifically, of rehabilitating, or reinstating the home as a centre of interest for things moral and religious. The need for some such reënforcement of religious education has never been so keenly felt as now. Recent disclosures of moral obliquity in public and private affairs, however painful they have been, may have nevertheless a hidden virtue, if they but reveal once more the need of that moral restraint which must be built with an insistent early training into the very atoms of our blood. In the next decade the whole force of the church should be devoted to the task of producing greater religious insistence in the home. That this cannot be done apart from the capable use of the Bible goes without saying.

There is one thing to be insisted upon in the new propaganda of religious education in the home—that *the greatest aid the home can render to religious education is the lodging in the mind of the child of a permanent interest in and affection for the Bible.* The first principle of pedagogy is the creation of

desire, interest, affection. Bible instruction in the early years is far less important than the instilling in the minds of the young of a real love and admiration for the Bible. Or, to state it otherwise, instruction in the Bible in the early years should be carried on with relatively slight regard for the technique of education, but with very great regard for the feelings produced, the tastes established, and the desires awakened. "The child must *feel* before it can know," says George Henry Lewes, in *Ranthurpe*. It is related of the poet Tennyson,\* that he had but a single memory of a certain school of his boyhood. "The only good I ever got from it," he said, "was the memory of the words, *sonus desilientis aquæ*, and of an old wall covered with wild weeds opposite the school windows." Yet it may be that even so unimportant a thing as "the sound of leaping water" was creative of the young poet's tastes. It is emphatically true that religious education, particularly in the early stages, must be delivered from bare technicality. It consists more than all in the awakening of favorable feelings or predilections; in the stirring of the mind with interest in those hours of life when the memory is "wax to receive and marble to retain." The highest of all strategies in teaching the Bible to the young, lies in instilling within the mind a genuine feeling for the Bible, and in preventing the rise of prejudice. The testimony of many adults, that in childhood they conceived a dislike for the Scripture, suggests at once the existence of a problem that is worthy of the most careful study. It has been said that "unsympathetic drill in Latin classics

\* *Memoir by his son*, vol. i, p. 7.

has given many a boy since Byron a loathing rather than a love for Horace." The method of teaching in the schools has been indeed wholly revolutionized with the view of preventing prejudice. Is there not an important suggestion here for religious education? The first victory of religious education, in fact, is to give to the child the feeling that the Bible is an interesting Book. Now this task belongs first of all to the home. All methods of handling the Bible in the home should resolve themselves into the effort to produce with young minds the fascination of the Book. The opportunity of childhood is lost if the home fails to produce an impression of the charm of the Scripture. We are not without hope that the discussions contained in previous chapters of this volume may have indicated certain resources of the Bible which are especially available for children in the home. The canvas of Scripture is so crowded with incidents, names, narratives, and actions, that any intelligent parent, who will give the subject time and thought, should find it easy to interest a child. There is need of a manual of directions for parents in the use of the Scripture based upon pedagogical principles. Such a manual might contain suitable elementary courses, and suggestions as to the best methods of enlivening Bible teaching in the home. Let it be remembered always that there is one fundamental principle in teaching the Bible to children—this is *Interest*. Never, for one moment, permit the child to think that the Bible is a dull Book. Let all instruction seek to produce lively impressions of the Bible. Make it *familiar*, not of course in a vulgar sense, but in the sense of

reality. In short, let the home strive to give the child a liking for the Bible. If it can accomplish this, the more technical parts of Bible training may be safely left to other agencies.

2. *The Sabbath School.* The problem of the Sabbath School is more a problem of the teacher than of the pupil. The aim of the Sabbath School is to *instruct*: it is nevertheless true that the method of the School is to *interest*. No other organization has such need to be interesting as the Sabbath School. Humdrum and dulness are among its greatest perils. It is probably true that more than half the indifference of church members to the Bible to-day originated in the dulness of the Sabbath School. It is pertinent to ask why it is that ten years in the Sabbath School for the average child do not produce an average church member who is really interested in the Book? Many pages have been devoted of late years to the discussion of the sources of success for the teacher. In the last analysis, the most successful teacher is the one who creates a contagion of interest in the Book. The highest kind of skill is the skill that rouses the young mind. This is "the service of services." One who dedicated a book to his teacher couched his tribute in these significant words—

"To her who  
Early in life's morning  
Was the first to call me."

Given a company of alert young minds, such as the Sabbath School never fails to furnish—wherein lies the secret skill wherewith the teacher may weld

their minds with abiding interest to the Word of God?

There is no other single gift of the teacher that makes so largely for interest in the mind of the pupil, as the gift of imagination. We have already discussed the value of imagination at length: \* we wish now to suggest its special usefulness in teaching the Bible to younger minds. We do not forget the caution that is necessary in presenting this subject. Imagination is not fancy, neither is it mere rhapsody. Imagination is that faculty of the mind which gives mental reality to things, and which builds truth up into new creations and makes new and valuable adaptations. As thus defined, imagination is a *sinc qua non* for the teacher. Without it, indeed, a certain light and power are lacking in the teacher's work; dulness creeps in and the process of teaching becomes mechanical instead of vital; and another and worse result may ensue—a sense of unreality overtakes the teacher and is felt by the scholar. It is no doubt true that the unenlivened feelings of children in relation to the Bible are frequently traceable to their teachers, to their lack of imaginative grasp and sympathetic appreciation. To such teachers the Book has never really appeared as alive and powerful, as throbbing with interest and feeling. To them it is a text-book of facts that are to be strung like beads on memory's string; it scarcely occurs to them that a larger service consists in clothing these facts with reality and giving them vital interest for the mind. The bane of Sabbath School teaching is *Dryasdust*. This is true

\* "The Religious Use of Imagination," Chapter IV.

also of day-school work, only it must be said that secular education has long since insisted upon the remedy. The most portentous fact in religious education is the fact that only the exceptional child develops a keen interest in the Bible. To the average child, of Sabbath School age, it would scarcely occur to think of the Bible as an interesting Book. His sympathies for it have never been enlisted. Soon he grows to think of it as involving a task. In short, the appeal of the Book to those lively feelings and imaginations that belong naturally to the early years has never been exercised. Happy is the child who never learns to cherish a secret distaste for the Bible, who thinks of it from his early years as the Book of his heart, the companion of his most friendly feelings, the Book of all good loves and purposes and hopes for life. It is in the highest degree important to realize that the child's impressions of the Bible are apt to crystallize into a life-long feeling. Happy the child, therefore, who in home or in school has found a teacher who has imbued him with an undying taste for God's Book. This is the task of faith, to be sure, but it is also the task of imagination, which is that element of skill in the teacher that possesses the mind of the scholar with the reality, the forcefulness, and the attraction of the thing that is taught.

There are three distinct services of imagination in handling the Book. *First:* To make the Bible familiar. To give the child early a comfortable sense of being at home in the Bible, to possess his mind with the thought that it is not an alien book, that there is no distance between the Book and his own life, to make him feel that the scenes here depicted, and

the truths here presented are the native heath from which he may not wander—this is what we mean by making the Bible familiar. *Second:* To make the Bible vivid. To give the scenes, incidents, histories, and persons a strong sense of reality; to make them live; to deliver them from the dimness of distance and the dulness of unreality; to personalize, to vivify, to illuminate, to give grace, feeling, and imperative to the teaching—further, to bring the truths of the Bible within the arena of a child's understanding, so that they may truly *find* him in his growing life—this is what we mean by making the Bible vivid. *Third:* To make the Bible interesting. To obtain for the Bible its true force of appeal to the natural faculties of the mind, the keenness of curiosity, for example, the zest of search and discovery, and more than all, the satisfaction of finding in the Book things that are familiar to the mind, things that might have been known and experienced in some other sphere—in short, to make the Bible friendly with life on the plane of its common experiences—this is what we mean by making the Bible interesting. To give a child a thorough acquaintance with the rich and varied material of the Scripture is to furnish him at least the beginnings of a liberal education. All his life long his mind will be amply supplied with images, types, illustrations, and names, that become to him, with the outworking of his own experience, the symbols and criteria of life. They will be heard in his speech, seen in his writing, and felt in the silent forces of his life. We have heard of an eminent Christian surgeon, a specialist of wide reputation, who is training his children care-

fully in the newspaper and the Bible. The combination seems almost incongruous, although we recall the practice of an eminent and scholarly teacher of Ethics and Sociology, who gathers much of his material from the same apparently unrelated sources. It is indeed conceivable that a thorough knowledge of the newspaper and the Bible may bring one into very close contact with life.

The natural instrument of the imagination is the story. How well furnished the Book is in the material of incident and story need not be pointed out. It is a veritable gallery of faces and events. "If I were king of the world," says President G. Stanley Hall, "I should have an examination of teachers as to their ability to tell a good story. It is the one hypnotic influence that tends for morals." "Things live," he has also said, "when they are told." Neither the teacher before the Sabbath School class, nor the minister in his pulpit, can afford to neglect the fascination of the story. It is easy to fail in this part of the art of Bible-teaching; but success at this point is worth seeking. Indeed it is as likely to promote interest in the Bible among adults as among children. It would be well if the teachers of our Sabbath Schools and the ministers in our pulpits could be trained in the legitimate use of the narrative element of the Scripture. To the end of time it will remain true that nothing is more powerful to move men than the story. How wonderfully God has provided for this in his Book! To be able to give graphic recital before the class or in the pulpit of some life-giving incident or story of the Book, with such illuminations as a chastened imagination

may rightly furnish, is a gift that is to be coveted by every teacher of the Word. The Bible is preëminently a Book for the imagination. We may recall again Dr. Guthrie's analysis of preaching—to prove, to paint, to persuade. Only let it be remembered that imagination is something more than painting: it is at once the lifting of truth into that clear light where the mind sees irresistibly its meaning, and looks beyond, even into the realm of new creations and new applications. The consummate task of the teacher, in brief, is to make the Book live in the heart and life of the child.

3. *The Young People's Society.* Our remarks on this topic are intended to apply especially to the society of young people in the higher grades. At no point in the church's organized life is the problem of religious education so interesting, so delicate, and so difficult. It is no longer the child that is dealt with here: it is the young and active mind of youth, for the most part in daily contact with the educational impulse of the schools, and, therefore, impressionable in a very strong degree to the force of instruction. This period is moreover a critical period, in that it introduces a natural transition between the unformed thinking of childhood and the settled logic of young manhood and womanhood. In this time of transition, the young mind is likely either to loosen its attachments, or more strongly to establish itself in early habits and thoughts. The peril of this period is that of the waning of early instincts and associations, and the growth of hostile feelings, or of indifference and neglect. This, in brief, from the psychological side, suggests some-

thing of the problem of the young people's society. It suggests also the duty of the church in directing and fostering its young people in their hour of unconscious need. That the church has never awokened to this duty goes without saying. The rise of the young people's movement in the church, and its steady advance in power and usefulness for the greater part of a generation, is proof of a higher Providence than that of the church. There is at this time a very manifest check in the growth of young people's work, the cause and cure of which should be discovered as quickly as possible.

There are two laws that govern in religious education: the law of *impression*, and the law of *expression*. Too exclusive application of the first law tends to produce a spiritual mechanism which may be ever so exact and strong, but may lack in the beauty of action, in other words, *thought without voice*. Too exclusive application of the second law tends to produce voice, tone, utterance, which may be ever so attractive and fervent, but may be lacking in a body of thought, a background of knowledge and experience. Harmonious results are obtained where the two laws work together, where care is taken to create in the mind a background of knowledge, and where equal care is taken to lead the mind forth in the testimonies of utterance and service. It is now very clear that the work of our young people's societies represents for the most part an uneven balance between the two laws. We thrust a young person into this eager band of disciples and expect him, from Sabbath to Sabbath, to give *expression* to the Christian faith and life that are in him. It is a proc-

ess of very great interest, and one that is productive of a great amount of good. The church needed such a process. Yet it is fraught with an equal peril. It is the peril of unreality, the peril of a forced or made-up experience. The law of expression soon exhausts itself unless there is a co-ordinate use of the law of impression. This law of impression would give the young Christian the material for expression, would build up constantly a body of thought, knowledge, and experience, to which utterance may be given in speech and service. To neglect this balance of parts is to invite exhaustion. The present check in young people's work we believe to have come about in this way. The lack of balance begins to appear; a sense of exhaustion has come.

This critical statement only accentuates the duty and opportunity of the church in relation to the work of the young people. Never before in its entire history has the church confronted such an opportunity in the development of its youthful forces. With a large body of awakened young people in its midst, trained for the most part under the tutelage of the law of expression—the problem and opportunity are to provide more amply for the co-ordinate or complementary law of impression. This would not involve the abandonment of the present method of young people's work. The value of testimony is well established; no change that would weaken the hold of the law which we have described as the law of expression upon the young people's work should be tolerated. But it is clear that the young people's work needs a stronger background. Experience must be nourished by a real supply of knowledge;

testimony must be enriched by study; and activity must be reënforced by thought and meditation.

In brief, the opportunity of the hour is to make of the Young People's Society an Institute of the church for the training of young Christians in the facts and activities of the Christian life. There are serious difficulties to confront in the transition. To try, for example, to transform the Young People's Society into a theological class, would be but to invite failure. We believe, however, that it is possible, in the present juncture, to provide for the young people of the church a plan of education in spiritual things which would give ample play to the law of impression; which would tend to establish a right balance between thought and action; which, instead of limiting or hurting the present energy of young people's work, would rather enrich and strengthen it. In such a plan the Bible must, of course, occupy a large place. Attractive courses of study in the books of the Bible, in Bible history, Bible structure, and Bible themes should be marked out. Here as elsewhere emphasis should be laid on the *making of interest* in the Bible. Plans for Bible reading should be used that would promote interest by continuity. Young people, it should be remembered, are at an age when sustained interest is a definite factor in education. Give them something to do; make their work worth while. We contemplate, in other words, such a reconstruction of the young people's work of the church as will bring to bear more definitely than before upon the rich and quick instincts of young hearts, the whole force and attractiveness of the Book. The Bible is the true corrective of the

dangers just mentioned; and we believe that the future usefulness of the young people's societies depends in large part upon Bible study. In the next decade we hope to see the safe establishment within the church, upon the foundations already laid, of a Young People's Institute, wherein the young forces of the church may be trained both to know and to do—where especially the enthusiasm of the Book shall be further developed and its power for service exercised. The church should set itself the task of providing a new education for young people, the basis and inspiration of which must be the Bible.

4. *The Pulpit.* Having already discussed the work of the Pulpit\* in handling the Book, it is sufficient here to say that there is no task to which the culture of the ministry should more readily make itself subservient than to the task of training the young minds of the church in the love of the Word of God. The time may come when the test of a successful pastorate shall be found, not in eloquence, not in great sermons and great audiences, not in large membership, not in multiplied organizations—but rather in the young hearts of the flock of God that have been captivated for all time by the fascination of the Book.

\* See Chapter XII, "The Strength of the Pulpit."











